

**Ethnic relations and the Production of Social Space: An
ethnographic study of Ethnicity in Kumanovo,
Macedonia**

Olsi Dudumi

University of Helsinki

Faculty of Social Sciences

Sociology Department

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Abstract

This Master's thesis examines the ethnic relations in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) through an ethnographic study based on a four-month fieldwork in the city of Kumanovo, where communities have been recently displaced from their traditional neighborhoods. More broadly speaking, this research addresses the increase of everyday life violence and physical separation of the Albanian and Macedonian communities. To this end, it employs two current theoretical developments in social sciences to show the insight into people's actions and everyday life situations: on the one hand, the cognitive turn proposed by Rogers Brubaker in the study of ethnicity, regarding *the process* as a primary focus of analysis, and the spatial turn of Henri Lefebvre, giving space a crucial role in determining social relations.

The thesis analyzes data gathered from a four-month ethnographic fieldwork in Kumanovo, northwest FYROM. In these fourth months data were gathered through a combination of various ethnographic tools. Participant observation was used with young people in the city and during an internship position that I took during the first three months. Formal and informal interviews were used in locations outside the working place. Virtual and spatial ethnography assisted in mapping, recording and understanding more deeply the everyday spatial life of actors.

The analysis revealed how ethnicization happens through the production of social space in the city. Despite the state's provisioning of a multiethnic legal framework, ethnic division remains persistent. Top-down multicultural policies have transformed once-existing social relations. My analysis shows that a keener focus on the production of social space gives profound insight in the ethnicization process.

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1. Introduction

Within the social sciences, research on ethnic relations, minority/majority rapport, immigration, integration, and race issues is growing in importance. This owes to the ever-growing heterogeneity across societies in our contemporary world. Migratory movements have created new diverse communities not only in the western world but across the globe. Democratization processes following the fall of the Eastern Block and post-colonialism have given a voice to suppressed ethnic groups, inverting former relations of domination (or creating new ones). As diversity keeps on gaining impetus in the social world, so do the sociological theories of diversity and ethnic relations that aim to explain it.

The growing focus on ethnicity and ethnic relations has opened up new conversations within the field of social research. The new research locations are not only the ways in which diverse western societies deal with migration movements, but also those societies where diversity had existed, where majority-minority relations have always been paramount to the functioning of the society. Social research and sociology undergo a revival of the focus on “old ethnicities” in societies across the globe. This thesis places itself in this reemerging tradition of research which takes the opportunity of the ongoing theoretical development in the field of ethnic relations, and looks at ethnic relations between the “old ethnic groups” in the South Eastern European country of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

In general terms, one might understand ethnic relations as just another type of social relations driven by ideas of ethnicity and identity. This simple outlook of the notion notwithstanding, the importance of understanding the way in which ethnicity and identity function in society continues to drive new research in social sciences. Historical processes are essential in determining one’s idea of a group, just as the economy and political processes are equally relevant in determining the formation of groups and identities.

By way of bringing forward new possibilities of looking at what can determine or produce ethnicity and identity from a sociological perspective, this thesis builds on another growing field within social research, the “spatial turn,” which was advocated firstly by the French

philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1968).

The spatial turn in the social sciences aims at answering questions regarding social relations by giving a more significant attention to *space*, which in this conceptualization extends beyond geography. Indeed, the social turn in sociology posits that space is intimately linked with social processes at the level of relations between people in society and how they are bound with their social reality.

Therefore, this thesis aims to look at the social processes of ethnic relations through placing a keen focus onto social space and its production in the diverse and divided city of Kumanovo, in the Republic of Macedonia ¹. Through ethnographic research, I want to touch upon the research question of how space determines ethnic relations in diverse societies such as that in Macedonia.

While the amount of research on ethnic relations and social space has seen an overall increase, very little research has been done on the Macedonian context. The lack of such research in Macedonia is visible from the total absence of “spatiality” in analysis. At the same time regions, cities, and villages are divided along ethnic lines not only politically, socially or economically. Indeed, the division that contains and reproduces other divisions is primarily spatial. Most of the previous research on Macedonian society have focused on good governance and stable ethnic relations, to the detriment of a spatial analysis of relations between ethnic groups.

This absence of spatial analysis is symptomatic also for other societies and contexts where ethnic relations continue to deteriorate and lead to social division. Therefore, this thesis argues that by looking at space and ethnic relations we could better understand the prolongation and division seen between communities in the recent years not only in the city

¹ The official name of the country according to the constitution is The Republic of Macedonia, although due to the dispute over the name “Macedonia” with the Republic of Greece, it was admitted in the United Nations (UN), and referred internationally (EU, NATO, OSCE etc.) under the provisional title The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). Throughout this thesis I will refer to the country as the Republic of Macedonia respecting in this way the constitution of the Republic.

of Kumanovo but also countrywide. The top-down multi-cultural and multi-ethnic policies, the peace agreements assuring cultural and political rights and more stable inter-ethnic relations have not resulted in positive results regarding the relations between people. In this thesis, I argue that the lack of spatial analysis of the ethnic relations in Macedonia is the main reason why these well-aimed policies backfire, which is to say that they produce outcomes which are entirely opposite from what their purpose was in the first instance. Space produces and reproduces the existing social and ethnic relations, and as a result it shapes the two different social realities of the communities. Both research and politics since the fall of Yugoslav communism in the country continue to overlook the importance of space.

The central question that my research aims to answer is as follows: How does the production of the ethnic, social space in Kumanovo determine the social life of subjects?

Answering this question brings several intellectual influences into dialogue, given that questions of space and ethnic relations have rarely been addressed together. Indeed, when questions of space and ethnicity are put together in research, the focus is mainly on the economic aspects of social division ((Harvey, 2012; Soja, 1989; Stavrides, 2016))

Through a focus on the everyday social life of actors, my research examines how space is reproduced and maintained and what is the role everyday life place in the ethnic spatial division in cities with such diverse societies.

I propose to address the questions above by engaging with two social theories whose importance has grown in the last decades, as different researchers have resorted to, and thereby enriched, these theories' methodology and scope of analysis. The thesis therefore seeks to provide a theoretical contribution to the spatial and the cognitive turn that have been growing in the social sciences since the late 1960s and 1990s, respectively. These two turns deal with the two crucial aspects that this thesis looks into and combines: social space and ethnicity. As already mentioned in the first paragraphs of this introduction, the combination of the two is seldom undertaken by social scientists, especially by sociologists. These two turns have opened up new possibilities for research by enabling a new, more profound understanding of persisting social problems.

The choice of location for my research was determined by the recent events that deepened the division between the groups and the fact that the communities have historically lived in the same space together despite all the differences that have become more apparent in the last decades. Moreover, my prior knowledge of the context and of the background of ethnic relations in this society helped in the decision of fieldwork and groups to research.

The methodology used for the research was adapted to the variety of situations with which I was met during my research. However, qualitative methodology was always predominant. Research dealing with topics like group identity, group relations, social space, everyday social life and small-scale groups is best conducted through an ethnographic perspective. Despite the initial ideas of using ethnography and the influence of the social constructivist theoretical viewpoint, there was no definitive answer until the final stages of the research and the beginning of the writing process. By means of ethnography and participant observation, I managed to gather a large amount of data in the four months of my field work. The data gathered varied from informal discussions with different actors, to informal and formal interviews. These four months allowed for a lot of visual data to be collected. This visual data included spatial dynamics but also photos and videos. The analysis of the data was done in many stages, partly with the assistance of software such as Atlas.ti and mostly through going through them over and over again.

The structure of the thesis and its chapters is as follows:

The first chapter following this introduction will be a description of the historical background of the context that I aim at analyzing in addressing my theoretical questions. The chapter will introduce the reader to the ethnic relations in the Republic of Macedonia. The context of the ethnic relations in Macedonia is of utmost importance to understand the stands that both communities have towards each other. Due to the effect of space for this thesis, as well as the focus of it, the historical background will stretch until the first time Macedonia gained sovereignty under the Yugoslav Socialist Federation in 1945 after WWII. The chapter will

present the reader with an introduction to the city of Kumanovo, where I conducted my fieldwork. I will then sketch a historical background of the city, tightly related to that of the country, since its population is the basis for the analysis.

The second chapter is dedicated to the literature review. At the same time this chapter lays down the theoretical focus and background that the research questions will analyze further. I will emphasize in particular the two theoretical turns, spatial and cognitive, for which I provide a definition and a detailed discussion. In this way, the two principal terms the thesis deals with, space and ethnicity, will be better defined and thus more instrumental for my research. The chapter will continue by reviewing the literature on ethnic relations and ethnicity in the context of the Republic of Macedonia and then will go on to discuss the available works on spatiality and ethnic relations.

The third chapter will discuss the methodology used. First, it delves into the theoretical discussion of the chosen methodology and the benefits it provides for such research questions. Then, the chapter continues with explaining the process of data gathering for this research. Central to this chapter will be reflexivity and my own role as a researcher and my positionality, given that I am considered to be part of one of the ethnic groups in the research.

The fourth chapter will present the findings and analyze them through the theoretical and methodological tools discussed previously. The chapter is divided into three parts each discussing the production of social space and ethnicity in the city of Kumanovo in the Republic of Macedonia. The division of the chapters follows the three processes evidenced by the social production of space as a methodological guideline in analyzing the production and reproduction of social space. Throughout these sections, I employ an interplay of theory, methodology, research data, and analytical tools in order to answer the research question that motivated and guided this research.

The conclusion of the thesis will lay out the final remarks that the research reaches. It will

summarize the main findings as well as portray the main difficulties faced through the research process. Most importantly the conclusion will set out a possible future agenda for other future research in the field of cognitive ethnicity and production of social space.

2. Ethnic Relations in the Macedonian Context

In this chapter, I locate the ethnographic fieldwork in the broader context of the Republic of Macedonia by discussing the history and development of ethnic relations in the country, as well as the location of my fieldwork. The section aims to highlight the most relevant points in the history of ethnic relations in three periods: The Yugoslav Republic, post-independence, and post-2001 violent conflict.

The discussion will then focus on how these three periods of ethnic relations played out in the context of Kumanovo, the city where my ethnographic fieldwork was situated.

The city of Kumanovo is very important in the context of ethnic relations in the country, as it provides an illustrative sample of the interplay of history, politics, and economy in the country. It is therefore crucial to discuss the general historical background and context of the whole country and society of Macedonia before moving on to look at more specific location such as that of Kumanovo.

Although exemplary in several ways, the city is also particular in some sense. Situated in between historical regions of Macedonia and Albania, it has a balanced population of both ethnic groups. Given its ethnic composition, the town has always played a role in the different uprisings of the Albanian community, as well as in those of the Macedonian one. In 2001 the violent conflicts started from the outskirts of Kumanovo went on to have more impetus in the other towns with larger majorities. Despite the eruption of the violence in such instances, Kumanovo can be regarded as a town with a generally peaceful co-existence of the two communities. The tensed ethnic relations between the groups in the city have never translated into systemic violence. They have, however, translated into division and separation. The presentation of this historical context in this chapter will aim at showing the transposition of the general historical eras which have left an impact on the ethnic relations of the two communities within the country and more specifically within the city of Kumanovo.

2.1. Historical Background of Yugoslav Macedonia

The Republic of Macedonia has since antiquity been situated at the crossroads of different civilizations and empires, from the Illyrian and Thracian Kingdoms to Kingdom of Macedonia, through the Roman and then Byzantine Empire, to with the Ottoman Empire. Macedonia is a landlocked country in southeast Europe, in the Balkan peninsula, with a population of two million people living in an area of 25,713 km². The country shares the border of 748 km with five countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Kosovo², and Serbia.



Map of the Former Yugoslva Republic of Macedonia. Wikipedia 2018

Geographically, Macedonia is located in a large valley formed along the main river that

² This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence. Throughout this thesis I will refer to the country without the footnote designated by the UNSC.

splits its territory, Vardar, and its borders are surrounded by the mountain range of Sar, Korab, and Jablanica. Mountain Korab is the highest mountain range of the country, marking the border with the Republic of Albania to the west. The Republic of Macedonia shares part of its border with Greece and Albania through the three lakes, Lake Ohrid, Lake Prespa and Lake Small Prespa. Of the three lakes, Lake Ohrid stands out as one of the deepest and oldest lakes in Europe.

The focus of this research starts where the geographical landmarks end. The location of the fieldwork is in the region of Kumanovo, where Mountain Sar range stops and the valley of Presevo in Serbia begins. Kumanovo is a city located in the area with the same name, where the borders of Kosovo and Serbia meet. Macedonia's status as a landlocked country is not only visible in the geographical sense but also reflects on the bordering states, the relation with which has been conflictual especially since the 1990s. With the breakup of Yugoslavia in the late 1980s, the name of Macedonia became the focus of disputes between Greece and the newly independent state. Greece has since then opposed the use of the name, without a territorial compound, citing historical and territorial concerns. Tensions also emerged with the Republic of Bulgaria in the north-east, when the Bulgarian government at the time did not recognize the Macedonian language as a distinct one but categorized it as a dialect of the Bulgarian language. Tensions arose in the religious sphere as well for the new republic, as the Republic of Serbia and Montenegro opposed the creation of a separate autocephaly for the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

The country's neighbor in the west, Albania, was the only country which fully recognized the newly formed state. The two countries did not show any conflictual relations with the independence of Macedonia despite the fact that the second largest ethnic group in Macedonia is its Albanian minority. Although many feared that the ethnic dispute was going to be the biggest problem with the westward neighboring country, ethnic tensions did not cross the border. In fact, ethnic tensions started to emerge from the first day of the country's independence, and the internal struggle that these generate continues to put Macedonia in the headlines. As such, the analysis of relations between the two major ethnic groups spans several directions.

When we talk of Macedonia today, we have to keep in mind the many periods the territory has passed through and the many different rulers and empires it has endured. These phases and stages come together with conflict but also benefits and gains. The different époques have left a mark on many aspects of life, which are felt today in cultural, social and economic life. The presence of history, from the ancient cities of Heraclea of King Philip II of Macedonia to the ancient remains in the town of Scupi (nowadays the capital Skopje), is but one of the reminders of the different influences existing here. Skopje, once the center of all trade routes in the Ottoman Empire, as shown in its impressive architecture, preserved its Ottoman commercial heritage, which one can experience when roaming inside the Bazars' narrow alleys. The present small Turkish minority in the city, the smell of Turkish coffee and the many tea houses can easily pass for any bazaar in Turkey or any Middle Eastern country. Early human inhabitation and the rich cultural diversity coming with it have strengthened the ethnic diversity that the country and region possess (Nora, 2012; Rossos, 2008). This diversity across the area where Macedonia is situated now inspired the nineteenth-century French adjective "Macedoine" to refer to a salad of mixed fruits (Danforth, 1997, p. 57).

Owing to its geopolitical developments the country has passed through, the relations between the different ethnic groups have always played a significant role in shaping the politics in Macedonia. The "Albanian problem" concerning the newly founded Macedonian state, in particular, has gained salience in the socialist and post-socialist eras. This thesis will particularly zoom into the so-called "Albanian problem," as ethnic relations between the Albanian minority and the Macedonian majority are crucial for understanding the current societal, economic and political development.

The political evolution of Macedonia as a sovereign state, more or less recognized internationally, begins after the Second World War, with the establishment of the Socialist Federal Republics of Yugoslavia. The newly created federation was made up of six socialist republics: Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia, with Belgrade as the capital. Also, it included two autonomous provinces within the Serbian Socialist Republic: Kosovo and Vojvodina. The newly created federation was a

direct successor of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia³, which came to life with the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the break of the First World War, there was a call for the unification of all southern Slavs into one kingdom. The already established Kingdom of Croats, the Kingdom of Slovenes and the Kingdom of Serbia responded to the call to create the Kingdom of Yugoslavs. At this point, one might wonder about the rest of the “socialist republics” and their place during the life of this kingdom. It is important to note that the makeup of the Yugoslav Kingdom is essential to understand not only Socialist Yugoslavia and its discourse but also its breakup.

Borders, territories and national spaces have characterized many of the politics of rules in the Balkans. The wars of liberation and expansion of 1912 - 1913 led to what Maria Todorova refers as the “Balkanising” of the academic discourse and subsequently of the idea of what Balkans is in the “civilized world” (Todorova, 1997, p. 12). The Balkanising of the Balkans was the focal point in many of the analyses of Socialist Yugoslavia and its breakup. “The Balkans have a concrete historical existence” (Todorova, 1997, p. 12), which should not be underestimated.

The three Kingdoms that preceded the establishment of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had in the previous wars of liberation and expansion acquired new territories. For example what became later the Socialist Republic of Bosnia & Herzegovina, in fact, was part of the Kingdom of Croats. The Kingdom of Montenegro joined the Kingdom of Serbia just five days before the establishment of the Yugoslav Kingdom. At that time, the territory that later became the Socialist Republic of Macedonia was called Vardar Macedonia and constituted a region part of the Kingdom of Serbia. The regions of Kosovo and Vojvodina, which were to become autonomous for a short period during the Socialist Federation after the WWII, were also part of the Kingdom of Serbia. The Balkan peninsula is a complex and diverse region, “broadly speaking, a land of contradictions where everything is the exact opposite of what it might be reasonably expected to be” (Todorova, 1997, p. 17). All this might seem

³ During the first months of its existence, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was called Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

very complicated to a reader who lacks the encounter with the “Balkans.” However, the crucial point in looking at the “Balkans” is to keep in mind the “Orientalism “ of Edward Said (Said, 1979) and the “Balkanizing” of Maria Todorova. The two help the reader in understanding the borders, the territories, the spaces as well as the names of these lands, the symbolism that spaces represent for the people and politics.

The fall of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia at the start of the WWII opened the way for the establishment of the Proletarian Revolution along the lines of the October Revolution in Russia.

The configuration of borders, people, and spaces in the new Yugoslav Federation was different from what the previous Kingdom had maintained. Nations and people of different ethnic groups were “allowed” to establish their respective socialist republics, thereby doing away with the monarchic idea of ruling people of different nations. It was within this approach that the Socialist Republic of Macedonia was one of the six founding socialist republics, with its capital located in Skopje (J. Pettifer, 1999, 2001).

In Socialist Yugoslavia, “Brotherhood and Unity” was one of the main slogans cultivated by the Yugoslav Communist Party after the WWII by way of guiding the ethnic relations and differences in the federation. It was one of the building and founding blocks which distinguished it from the previous Kingdom of Yugoslavia. “Brotherhood and Unity” was embodied in both constitutions of the federation, that of 1963 and that of 1974, prescribing equality between nations and national groups within the new political framework. Moreover, the discourse and policies it created aimed at promoting the similarities and interdependence between the ethnic and cultural groups in order to overcome conflicts and frictions. The three-tier system of nations, nationalities and ethnic groups was one of the essential pillars of Yugoslavia in what regards national rights (Cowan, 2000; Nora, 2012; J. Pettifer, 2001; Poulton, 1995; Rossos, 2008). While individuals were entitled to the expression of their culture, religion, and ethnicity, groups, i.e., ethnic groups, had the oath to maintain peaceful relations with one another in the Federation.

Following tumultuous years during WWII and its aftermath, People's Republic of Macedonia was established in 1946 under this discourse. This framework paved the way for the emergence of the Macedonian national identity and a more "clearly defined Macedonianity" (Nora, 2012, p. 73).

The Macedonian awakening had already started in the last years of the Ottoman Empire, around the 1900s, with the culmination of the Illinden Uprisings in 1903 and the proclaimed "Illinden Republic." Although a short-lived uprising and republic, this historical event continues to reflect the ongoing nationalist aspirations to this day. The riots and the nationalist calls it put forward continue to be celebrated as the first move towards an independent state of Macedonia achieved by the Macedonian Nation (H. P. J. Pettifer, 1994; J. Pettifer, 2001; Poulton, 1995).

At the time of the establishment of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, ethnic Albanians constituted the largest minority group (Poulton, 1995) within the new country's territory. Despite the polished image advanced by the "nations and nationalities" discourse of Yugoslavia, relations between ethnic Macedonians and Albanians have historically been problematic (Poulton, 1995). The presence of the Albanian minority in the League of Communist and other government bodies was very minimal (Poulton, 1995; Rossos, 2008). The League of Communist was the Communist Party In Yugoslavia and the party governing the state. Each of the republics of the Federation had their League of Communist which governed their respective states. This party was the governing body of the state. As Poulton (1995) asserts, the 'minorities of Macedonia were not keen to join the ruling League of Communists, leading to the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, being effectively run by Macedonians' (Poulton, 1995, p. 75).

Ethnic relations between Albanians and Macedonians were inescapably interlinked with the situation of the broader Albanian community in other parts of the Yugoslav Federation, especially in Kosovo. The Albanian population in the Socialist Yugoslav Federation lived around the border areas of the People's Republic of Albania, from Montenegro to Macedonia. This compact settlement has characterized the ethnic relations in a spatial form where "the polarization of the communities has been associated with different parts of the

landscape” (Cowan, 2000, p. 127).

The tense and problematic situation of Albanians in the Yugoslav Federation came into the open with the removal of Alexandar Rankovic in 1966 from the Communist Party.

Rankovic was a prominent communist figure in the federation who championed a view of a tighter centralization of Yugoslavia and was consequently a fierce opponent of decentralization to the benefit of the republics. However, some of his better-known policies were related to the situation of the Albanian community in Kosovo. As the chief of the military intelligence, he pursued a hardline approach towards Albanians in Kosovo.

Rankovic sought to secure the position of Serbs in Kosovo by filling all the governmental bodies with Serbian nationals while at the same time persecuting Albanians for what he described as their sedentary attitudes. The waning down of his hardline policies of centralization paved the way for reformers to come to the fore and secure more rights for the republics. At the same time, this movement opened the road for autonomy and independence claims by the two regions of Kosovo and Vojvodina. The departure of Rankovic from his post in 1966 brought significant demonstrations advocating for the status of a republic for Kosovo. These uprisings in Kosovo were immediately followed by others in Tetovo, the second largest city in Macedonia, with a majority of ethnic Albanians (Poulton, 1995, p. 76).

The calls for the Independent Republic for the Albanian community in Yugoslavia took the Socialist Republic of Macedonia by surprise, not so much because of the deviation from the official “brotherhood and unity” discourse promoted actively by Communist Party, but mainly due to the territorial claim that these calls entailed. Simply put, an independent state for the Albanian community within the Federation meant a readjusting of the border for the other countries.

As was the case with the other parts of Yugoslavia, the response of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia to the nationalist manifestations of the Albanian minority was a severe one. In the name of “brotherhood and unity”, the League of Communists in Macedonia, the ruling political party, initiated the “differentiation” campaign.” The campaign which aimed at combating nationalism brought about the revision of school syllabi and textbooks and an

increase in Macedonian language classes in an attempt to halt the nationalist tide (Poulton, 1995).

Repressive attempts to curb the growing nationalism within the Albanian minority penetrated different areas of social life, private family gatherings, and traditional institutions. Poulton (1995) documents how people were arrested for “attending weddings where Albanian nationalist songs were sung,” or when registering children with names “which stimulated nationalist sentiments and adherence to the Peoples Socialist Republic of Albania” was dismissed (Poulton, 1995, p. 80).

Ethnic relations continued to be plagued by the same issues at the end of the 1980s together with the end of the Yugoslav federation for the Albanian community in Macedonia. Thus, these measures continued until the Yugoslav Federation began to crumble, in the end of the 1980s. During this period secondary education was regulated to curb the teaching of Albanian language into schools. The teaching of the Albanian language happened only when the number of students in classes exceeded 30 (Poulton, 1995, p. 81). Such measures led to dismissing many teachers from schools and classes curbing down due to lack of teachers. The outcome led to the placement of Albanian students in mixed classes. Many showed their dissatisfaction by boycotting the official schooling, resulting in the establishment of many “illegal” schools and universities. These illegal universities and schools would in the coming years be one primary factor in increasing inter-ethnic violence that broke out as the violent conflict in the year 2001.

2.2. Post Yugoslavia: Ethnic relations in Macedonia in the 1990s

The commitment of the authorities to introduce a multi-party system in Macedonia as a process towards democratization saw a further assertion of Macedonian nationalism in the country. The process of democratization started in 1989 with the country’s new constitution, prepared by the moderates’ offspring of the Macedonian Communist Party who saw a door to the independence in the midst of the troubles that were lurking within the Federation.

The new constitution relabeled the People’s Republic of Macedonia as “a nation-state of

Macedonian people,” in marked contrast with the previous definition that under the “brotherhood and unity” discourse had stood as “state of Macedonian people and Albanian and Turkish minorities” (Poulton, 1995, p. 172).

Macedonians voted on independence on 8th of September, 1991 with the overwhelming majority of the 65% of voters (Poulton, 1995, p. 177). In protest against the preparations for the new constitution, the Albanian community boycotted the referendum. Many perceived the new wording as classifying them as second-class citizens, and as further surrendering the demands they had formulated since the 1980s concerning language, education, and representation.

The referendum boycott escalated the tensions between the two ethnic groups. Fear and distrust were becoming the primary focus of the everyday lives of several citizens. The headline of the Skopje Daily Newspaper "Večer" from September 10th 1991 echoed the general feeling on the Albanian boycott of the referendum across society. The headline indicated that “the Macedonian state cannot rely anymore on the loyalty on the Albanians and that the possibilities should not be ruled out for the state to set up repressive measures towards the Albanian minority if the Albanian political parties seek the answers to their dilemmas in aggression and an all Albanian referendum (Večer, 10 September 1991. Quoted in Poulton 1995, p. 177).

The independence came to be considered a miracle in the midst of the violent conflicts in the Yugoslav Federation. However, the miracle stopped short after the independence, as the internal problems of the country starting with the recognition of the Albanian and other minorities gained further prominence with inter-ethnic violence becoming endemic in cities, towns and villages where Albanians and Macedonians lived. Externally the new country was faced with unrecognition from the International community due to its name and state symbols, with Greece leading the diplomatic efforts to block the new country. In the newly independent country, the Albanian minority saw itself in an impasse regarding political, economic and cultural rights. The many calls made by civil society concerning the suspension of the previous laws and regulations regarding the Albanian language since the Yugoslav period faced another blockage. The setback this time came due to the framework

of the new constitution, provisioning that “Macedonia is the state of the Macedonian nation” (Poulton, 1995, p. 85).

On the other hand, the loyalty of the Albanians towards the new Macedonian country and state did not impress the majority ethnic group. The large Macedonian majority was led to mistrust and fear when in 1992 an illegal referendum was held by Albanian political groups in which autonomy for the western part of Macedonia under the name of Republic of Illyrida was proclaimed (Rizova, 2011).

The Albanian community resorted to such radical measures because they saw the new state only as an expression of Macedonian-ness (Vankovska, 2006). At the same time the Macedonian majority saw the Albanian aspiration as an excuse to separate the country territorially.

From its early days, the Republic of Macedonia showed itself to be a weak state, lacking social cohesion and consensus of the organizing principles to determine the state power where exclusionary policies and insecurity from both Albanians and Macedonians over their future within the state led to an escalation of ethnic violence (Brubaker, 2004; Neofotistos, 2007; Roudometof, 2002; Wolff, 2007).

In the years that followed the independence the two communities saw themselves growing apart. The detachment took many forms from year to year. Society grew apart not only economically and politically, but separations were felt also at the level of everyday life and spatiality. Violence stemming from cultural expressions and tensing ethnic relations emerged in the aftermath of the events in 1995 and 1997 when the mayors of cities with Albanian majorities hoisted the Albanian flag and national symbols on municipality buildings. The police intervention leading to the arrest of the mayors sparked street protests from across the Albanian population during which more than a dozen people were killed and several were injured (Petroska-Beska & Najcevska, 2004). The issue at stake within society at large continued to be persistent. The Albanian community saw this as a setback to their freedom of expression of their ethnic, cultural and national identity. On the other hand the Macedonian majority perceived these actions as yet another step towards the territorial separation of the country.

For the Albanian community exclusion and repression from the state was felt especially when the Macedonian state did not recognize the newly opened University of Tetovo, the only one in Albanian language throughout the country, and instead sent police to close it down. To this day, the issue of education and language continues to be an apple of discord between the communities at the political and social level. There is hardly any moment in the political discourse that language issue is missing. While the Albanian political parties have it as their main political motto of equal language rights, the Macedonian ones denounce these requests as irredentism (Marovic, 2012).

In 2001 the Macedonian people, as well as their political elite would see their fears and distrust held against the Albanian Community proven. Violent clashes spurred in many villages and cities of Albanian majority between the Macedonian Army and Police versus the paramilitary troops of the National Liberation Army (NLA), linked with the NLA in Kosovo. The NLA in Kosovo had managed to achieve its success by de facto removing the links with the Government of Serbia and paving the way for an Independent new country. The ideology from the Kosovo NLA as well as the enthusiasm that finally Albanians can unite into one single state did influence the paramilitary groups to have their presence in the territory of Macedonia and put forward claims for greater autonomy and independence (for a more detailed account on the linkage between the two, see (Zahariadis, 2003).

What is important to mention is that the violence spread across the cities where the Albanian community lived. In Tetovo, the second biggest city in Macedonia, and the biggest city with an Albanian majority, violence swept the streets of the city center as rebels captured the city. A state of war was introduced by the Macedonian government, while the international community called for peace talks between the actors involved in the conflict.

Although the violence started on the outskirts of Kumanovo, most of it continued to happen for the next six months mainly in Tetovo, Gostivar and the Debar region. These are three regions host to Albanian majorities. The conflict of May 2001 paved the way for the future division and distrust of the two communities in their everyday social relations. On the

political surface, the international community gathered all the actors, including the rebels, at the negotiations table in Ohrid to lay down the Peace Framework for a multicultural Macedonian society. This was achieved six months after the conflict erupted. What it could not achieve was the reconstruction of the social bridges of trust which were destroyed with the first bullet shots. The start of the conflict on the outskirts of Kumanovo confirmed the fears of many Macedonians who saw the actions of the Albanian community for more cultural and educational rights as just an excuse for independence and separation. For the Albanian community the conflict did not achieve what was needed in their immediate social relations. What it did was to put them on hold for “justified attacks from the majority” and “justified less cultural and national rights”.

More than ten years have passed from the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The full implementation of the agreement has yet to be completed, continuing to leave space for speculation and social misrepresentations. While on the political surface it may look like a polished picture, but as soon as one looks at the everyday life relations between people the social hardly bears any more resemblance to the political.

2.3. Kumanovo in the context of Ethnic Relations

Kumanovo, the city where the research took place, is one of the biggest cities in the Republic of Macedonia. It is situated in the Northeast, bordering Serbia and Kosovo, with a distance of only 50 km from the capital city of Skopje.

From the latest census, Kumanovo has a population of 70,842 of which 25% are Albanian ethnics and 15% belong to other minorities (See table 1), making it a diverse city, and in that quite distinct from other places in the country. Next to the city of Kumanovo is the Municipality of Likovo, with an Albanian majority, bordering the Republic of Kosovo. The two municipalities, which were once part of a single administrative unit, are an illustration of how top-down policies on ethnic relations and social space interplay. The separation of the two municipalities took place with the signing of the Framework Peace agreement after the 2001 conflict. One of the main articles in the agreement puts a great emphasis on

decentralization as a process aimed to give more cultural rights to local communities. Despite this dynamic, the Albanians of Likovo still see Kumanovo as their city and district. People still spend most of their everyday social life in Kumanovo where a lot of them work, study and conduct business.

Ethnicity	Census 2002	
	Number	Percentage %
Macedonians	42,840	60.5
Albanians	18,277	25.8
Serbs	4,727	6.7
Roma	4,042	5.7
Turks	256	0.4
Vlachs	108	0.2
Bosniaks	14	0.0
Others	578	0.8
Total Population	70.842	

Figure 1: Population of Kumanovo according to Census 2002 (Office, Republic of Macedonia State Statistics, 2005)

Ethnicity and ethnic relations have been a defining feature not only in the life of Albanians but equally in that of Serbians, Roma, and Macedonians in the city of Kumanovo. Although Albanians did not make up the majority in the city, the Albanian nationalist manifestation has been at the forefront here since the inception of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia. The position of the city, stretched in between Kosovo, Albanian-populated areas of South Serbia, and Albanian-populated areas of Macedonia, has strengthened its function as a linkage to the rest of the Albanians in Yugoslavia.

In Kumanovo, as in the other parts of the country, the challenges faced by the Albanian

community were language use, exclusionary policies, the repression of cultural expression, as well as, more broadly speaking, the majority population's mistrust and fear towards them.

It was cities and towns like Kumanovo which were most affected by the "differentiation" campaign started by Macedonian authorities in the 1980s with the introduction of a new law on secondary education and Macedonian language use. As this law changed the language use and education of those using Albanian as their mother tongue, many students in vocational schools boycotted schools in the city (Poulton, 1995, p. 81) while others dropped out because of lack of knowledge of Macedonian language. Similar protests and demonstrations happened in Kumanovo in support of the Albanian community's demands for a greater recognition and for the adoption of non-exclusionary policies. These movements continued throughout the life of the newly independent country and had the same intensity and fate as in other parts where Albanians rebelled.

The first years of independence further separated the communities in Kumanovo and its surroundings, culminating in 2001 with the eruption of violence when fighters for the NLA transmitted in a communiqué that they controlled the villages of Tuznesh, at the border with Kosovo. While the Macedonian state treated this as territorial conquest and sent the armed forces in the communities inhabited almost only by Albanians, the Albanian population in the country saw it as a targeted attack on its integrity and its aspirations. The main demands put forward on the first days following the eruption of violence concerned constitutional, cultural and language rights instead of minority rights. However, radical voices within the same movement opted for separation and a move to join Kosovo or Albania. While these extreme views ceased with time, other demands took the conflict to several other towns, villages, and areas beyond Kumanovo.

The armed conflict lasted for six months, causing numerous casualties as well as many injured. The ending of the conflict was achieved by intense diplomatic efforts of EU and USA with the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (Petroska-Beska & Najcevska, 2004; Reka, 2011).

The set of constitutional amendments and laws within the Framework Agreement were

agreed in good faith regarding the improvement of ethnic relations between the two belligerent communities. The aim of these diplomatic efforts was meant to satisfy the demands of both groups that had brought them into conflict. Territorial integrity for the country was ensured to appease the Macedonian state, while extensive rights for the Albanian community were granted, as demanded throughout the conflict by the political branch of the paramilitary organisation NLA. Although the peace process guaranteed further cooperation and good ethnic relations on top political level, at the level of people's everyday life, violence and clashes between groups have not stopped.

Moreover, the violent conflict intensified the displacement of people and families from some parts of the city to join their kin and/or ethnic group in other places where it formed a majority. Ultimately, spatiality became politicized in the same way that ethnicity came to be politicized from the 1980s onwards in the everyday lives of people.

The framework amendment regarding decentralization and language rights reshaped the way in which ethnic relations were perceived and lived in the country. The right to language envisioned in the agreement postulated that a minority should count for 20% of the population for its language to gain official status. Therefore the decentralization process is intended to lump together people of one ethnicity in an attempt to reach this magical number (Dimitrievik, 2010; Engstrom, 2004; Engstrom, 2002; Lokale, 2011; Maleska, 2010; Wilkens, 2002).

Ethnic relations thus reshaped now translate into spatial relations, whereby space gains a much more significant role than ever before. Spatiality structures the everyday life of people in the city. Different areas of the town gain importance not only in the lived experience through the everyday social life but also in people's discourse. For example, in 2011 the capital city of Skopje saw violent clashes emerge when youngsters hoisted the Macedonian flag on a "space of the city" known to be the Albanian part (www.shqiperia.com, 2014). Another example is the "Skopje 2014" Government's development plan for the capital city, envisioning turning space and built environment of the capital into a history textbook of Macedonianness. However, this manifestly mono-ethnic aspect of space structuring is not the only concern in this plan. How space is used to

legitimize social and everyday life is of more importance when one traces the interplay of economy and politics through the investments in the projects.

In the city of Kumanovo clashes of this kind, although not televised, are present in social discourse. These events structure ethnic relations and everyday life of people in the city. But most importantly they structure the space, by configuring ethnic lines along which the two communities place themselves. Political strategies such as the one of the capital city, although not on such a size of investment, are equally present in Kumanovo and they shape the distinction between the neighborhoods of the city.

Thus, the political discourse on spatial structuring, as many other issues in Kumanovo and the country at large, are highly ethnicized.

It is not surprising, then, that social life in the city is more divided now than it was prior to the beginning of the conflict. Many families, from both communities, experienced it first hand when they decided to become displaced, together with their families. Willingly or unwillingly many experienced more division after the conflict than they had before.

Kumanovo, once a buzzing industrial town, stands not far from such reshaping of its social life. Parts of the city have entirely new demographics since ten years ago due to these internal displacements. Much of the town's outskirts are now joined to other municipalities so as to create majorities of one ethnic group. Division, segregation, differentiation of space and an overall altering of social life are what characterize Kumanovo now. It is in this context of ethnic relations that I conducted the four months of my fieldwork.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Introduction

This section of the thesis will present a detailed account of the theoretical background which complements the observations conducted during the fieldwork and the ethnographic writing. To this end, I attempt to define and discuss the concepts that I employ to make sense of the data that I gathered. The theoretical findings that I discuss here enable a vibrant discussion in the analysis process.

Sociological research oscillates around the debate of inductive and deductive standpoints. Notwithstanding the importance of this debate, it is imperative for researchers to realize that it is impossible to tend to one without the other. Ethnographic and participant observation are methods which rely on deductive approach. However, no research can be executed in purely deductive or inductive fashion, which is why I engage with the interplay of the induction and deduction process. This complex dynamic allows to fill in the gaps and to document the complexity of lived processes, by looking beyond one single side.

In this thesis, I privilege a deductive theoretical framework in order to analyse my the data, I cannot maintain that I went to the fieldwork with no theoretical framework. As any researcher and sociologist, I had my subjective, preliminary views on the concepts I employ and the facts I describe, which account for my choice of topic and might have also shaped the argument of my thesis. Nevertheless, the expansion and the change of my original framework shows the influence of the deductive approach, alongside the inductive process of my initial ideas.

The theoretical concepts employed in this thesis are numerous since throughout my research I analyze different phenomena which are interlinked in a fundamental way to each other, although these links have not been explored in previous research.

The fundamental purpose of the social sciences such as sociology, anthropology, and philosophy up to a certain point, is to account for daily life phenomena, but what makes such

subjects scientific ones and creates credibility is supporting such explanation and observations of daily life with an adequate theoretical background.

Some of the concepts below describe the fundamental theoretical approach which have provided the backbone of my thoughts during the observation, fieldwork and writing. Looking back and forth at the data a lot of my previous ideas and philosophical views got reassured and expanded with new theories and intertwined concepts.

During my fieldwork, the theoretical framework played a little role. The discussions, interviews, observations and informal talks happened mostly *ab nihilo*.

The choice for a deductive approach to the theoretical framework came from the methodology employed for this research, namely the ethnographic approach to gathering data. Despite this decision, from the start, I maintained that deductive approach did not mean zero inductivity in the way of using theory. On the contrary, the importance of the inductive approach emerged as a step into expanding and strengthening the theory to back up the claims that rested on the data collected from the field.

The theoretical background of the thesis is based on the philosophical standpoint that social worlds are socially constructed. Thus, the backbone of the research is informed by a constructivist, postmodernist approach to the social world. It is often argued that these paradigms have exhausted their potential, and that their ubiquity might have diluted the essence of their meaning. However, I see myself as a researcher and student of these schools and look at the social phenomena through the framework that they put forth.

With these two leading epistemological frameworks on the background, fieldwork and the analysis of the data by computer software as well as manually, enabled the emergence of different concepts. The most central among these concepts are: social space; the construction of ethnicity in everyday life; virtual and physical ethnic space; everyday life; ethnic identity; ethnic boundaries and spatiality. Therefore, I devote close attention to discussing these concepts in the following sections of this chapter.

3.2. International Literature on Social Space and Ethnic Relations

In our contemporary multiethnic societies, the term ‘ethnicity’ is gaining an important role as a category of social stratification. While ‘ethnic group’ might be a more common terminology in everyday use, it too incorporates within it notions of race, blood, culture, and nation, and above all it creates groups. ‘Ethnicity’, ‘culture’, and ‘nation’ are concepts which, having become ambiguous, do not easily lend themselves to definition (Eriksen, 2002; Hallden, Ellas, & Zenia, 2008).

This manifest ambiguity has led to a permanent contestation of this terminology. Two opposing views meet here. One considers such notions as perennial, the other as primordial modern concepts or as constructed through social relations. Despite the clash of these viewpoints, ethnicity fundamentally remains determinant in social relations in diverse societies.

However, other scholars tend to see ethnicity as a fundamental factor in the individuals’ sense of identification and giving meaning to the world (Hallden et al., 2008; Kymlicka, 1995). Many more confront the view of ethnicity as deeply rooted into human character, and instead tend to show it as a fluid concept under constant change and reinterpretation (Barth, 1969; Jenkins, 2008; Malasevic, 2004).

The importance of critically looking at the complexity of the concept of ethnicity has led to a more nuanced view of these concepts in line with the more complex postmodern social life. Anthropological and sociological studies were among the first ones to engage ethnicity as an aspect of social life rather than a rigid, unchanged attribute. Ethnicity and ethnic group started to be seen as socially constructed in and through our social life (Anderson, 2006; Barth, 1969; Billig, 1995; Brubaker, 2004; Eriksen, 2002; Jenkins, 2008; Malasevic, 2004; Rogers Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox, & Grancea, 2008; Ross, 2009). For these scholars, the concept appears as a category relying on social processes and discourses for its social construction. The same social processes work in the same way to reify constructed group differences on the different levels of social groups. Such analysis comes against to how many others see ethnicity and ethnic identity as a naturally occurring entity.

While the notion of ethnicity might overemphasize a particular type of bond, the ethnic bond, its critical examination can nonetheless reveal the processual and contextual dimension of relations between ethnic groups. According to Eriksen (2002), “the term ethnicity refers to relationships between groups whose members consider themselves distinctive”. This distinctiveness related to ethnic relations translates into cultural and identity difference. Nevertheless, as Eriksen observes, these cultural differences gain an ethnic element only when they are perceived as essential and when they take on the key significance of the social life of the actors. In other words, when discussing social relationships, ethnicity cannot be equated to a property of a community or group but rather constitutes an aspect of its relation to the outside world. The examination of ethnicity as an aspect of social life, rather than as a naturally occurring phenomenon, relies on the importance of social processes and discursive practices which construct and at the same time reify the differences and spaces between groups.

Fredrik Barth (Barth, 1969), one of the first academics who saw ethnicity as a socially constructed term, moved further from considering ethnic groups as categories of ascriptions and identifications, onto studying the boundaries that different ethnic groups maintain amongst themselves. Throughout his work, Barth analyzed the social processes which produce and organize the boundaries of ethnic identity and the differences between ethnic groups. These boundaries help construct ethnic categories which are indispensable to the organization of ethnic groups. Barth (Barth, 1969) urged social scientists to examine the boundaries between ethnic groups as social constructs rather than as natural facts. For Barth, social boundaries may or may not result in territorial and spatial boundaries. Moreover, Barth argued that to research ethnicity ultimately entails the examination of the processes which lead to the maintenance of ethnic boundaries.

Meanwhile another French sociologist, Henri Lefebvre, picked another aspect of social organization, and emphasized the importance of space and its social production as critical processes that govern social life.

The importance of boundaries, social or physical, came to be taken more into account within the study of ethnic relations. Barth and his followers put their efforts in researching ethnicity

within the frame of post labor migration into European societies. The questions raised were how to accommodate the growing diversity in cities in Europe. As globalization increasingly enabled migratory movements across the world in recent years, cities and countries across the globe become more multicultural, multiethnic and diverse. Parallel to the diversification of societies, segregation has followed suit. The process of segregation is visible throughout many cities and communities in Western Europe, for instance in the fact that the new migrant population consistently tends to occupy the ghettos. By contrast, in Eastern and Central Europe, segregation continues to refer to the ethnic communities existing for centuries within these countries.

The Barthian view on ethnicity was indeed revolutionary for the study of ethnic relations. Boundary maintenance of the group allowed the shift in focus from the “stuff” within the group to the group interaction. Such shift in the analysis made it essential to consider ethnicity as relational and situational. Notwithstanding the quintessential foundational grounds, the Barthian model of ethnicity has been criticized by some of its followers, such as Eriksen, Jenkins, Malasevic or Brubaker, for its ascription of ethnic identity and ethnic categorization. According to Eriksen (Eriksen, 2002), the term ‘ethnicity’ was viewed only as an attribute to the action of the agent, when he/she chooses A or B, failing to explain the existing structural categorizations and social factors that enable or coerce that choice. Eriksen and others sought to introduce a slight modification of the model of self-ascription advocated by Barth through analyzing how ascription made by others contribute to creating ethnicity. However, this criticism of the Barthian theory overlooked several other situational problems and categories which contribute to the determination of the fluid identities and lead to the self-ascription of a particular ethnic group. In plural societies ethnicity is constructed and reconstructed in the locus of everyday life, where interaction between the people is happening (Eriksen, 2002; Jenkins, 2008; Malasevic, 2004; Rogers Brubaker et al., 2008). The maintenance of ethnic boundaries that Barth called into focus happens through the everyday activities in an ascribed social space. The social space dialectically ascribes and reconstructs the boundaries of ethnic group and its identity.

The processual and relational aspect of ethnicity is a notion that all the constructivist theories (Eriksen, 2002; Jenkins, 2008; Malasevic, 2004; Rogers Brubaker et al., 2008) maintain. Rogers Brubaker takes the discussion a step further when advocating for social research to go beyond ethnic groups and do away with the groupism that has entrenched itself in all academic analysis. While groups unquestionably exist and people refer to them as such, what Brubaker suggests is that analytical language needs to treat the notion of group as an emic term, and to focus on its processual dimension, rather than take it for granted. A rethinking of ethnicity for Brubaker involves thinking of ethnicity not regarding “substantial groups but as practical categories, situated actions, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organizational routines, political projects, institutional forms. It means thinking of ethnicization as political, social, cultural and psychological processes” (Brubaker, 2004, p.11).

The most remarkable aspect put forth in Brubaker's cognitive turn to ethnicity is the problematization of groups by shifting the focus on the analysis in the categories instead. “A focus on categories can illuminate the multifarious ways in which ethnicity can exist and work without the existence of ethnic groups as substantial entities” (Brubaker, 2004, p.13). Apart from unveiling the performative nature of nationalistic rhetoric, this stance serves as a reminder not to take for granted the groupism that is omnipresent in discussions around ethnic conflicts. The cognitive turn is of great importance within the constructivist approach. Instead of just taking for granted that ethnicity is constructed, the new approach focuses more specifically on how ethnicity is constructed. This new turn asserts that ethnicity, like race or nationhood, are emic, rather than analytical, notions, i.e. are “fundamentally ways of perceiving, interpreting and representing the social world. They are perspectives on the world” (Brubaker, 2004).

Social space is a primary focus on the ethnicization process. Through the social space one perceives the social world. This perceiving and relation to ethnicization takes a vital role in the analysis. According to Eriksen (Eriksen, 2002), the construction of ethnic identities or ethnicity takes places within a defined space, and that is why some categorizations might be

viable while others may not. In this conception, spaces are not merely containers or perceptions that people have. Instead, they are in a dialectical relation to the ‘things’ that they contain; indeed, topographies shape and are shaped by the relations, perceptions, and things with which they are collated (Leeman & Modan, 2010).

The spatial turn of the 1960s in social theory put space as a primary focus when explaining different social phenomena and social relations. Henri Lefebvre, the pioneer of the spatial turn, considered “Space as a social product” (Henri Lefebvre, 1991). Using the concept of the production of space, Lefebvre refuted the conceptual paradigm which regarded space as independent from reality and as existing in itself. Instead, Lefebvre proposed to regard space as fundamentally bound up with, indeed as part of social reality, by postulating that space cannot exist “in itself,” and instead is produced by the social.

Thus, Lefebvre brings time and space on equal grounds and views them as equally integral aspects of practice. Space, just as time, are social products. “They are both result and precondition of the production of society” (Schmid, 2008).

Therefore, human beings who enter into relations with each other and consequently their activities and practices are the main factors to consider when analyzing the production of social space. In plural societies then it becomes clear that the importance of the production of space cannot be disentangled from ethnic relations and conflicts.

How is then social space produced in a multi-ethnic society? Lefebvre’s theory sees the production of space divided into three dialectically dimensional processes: perceived, conceived and lived space (Henri Lefebvre, 1991; Schmid, 2008). Perceived space relates to the materiality of the elements that constitute space, compromising the perceivable social practice. Conceived space, on the other hand, is envisioned as previously thought space, thus relating it directly to the production of knowledge. The conceived space includes discourses, politics but also maps for example. The third dimension, lived space, has more to do with the lived experience of space as experienced by the actors in their everyday life practices. Grounding analysis of space in this three-dimensionality opens the perspective of identifying all the social processes that contribute to its production.

Starting from the theoretical building blocks of Lefebvre, Edward Soja (Soja, 1989) took on to challenge the relation between *time* and *space* within the social sciences and argued for a more profound “critical spatial perspective in the contemporary social theory”, on the grounds that “Today, it may be the space more than the time that hides consequences from us, the making of geography more than the making of history that provides the most revealing theoretical world,” as he wrote in 1991 in his seminal work, *Postmodern Geographies* (Soja, 1989, p. 1). For him, and the other social geographers of the time (for example, (Harvey, 2012), it was necessary to reshuffle social theory and to re-entwine the making of history with the social production of space.

For Soja and Harvey critical spatial thinking circles around three main focuses (Soja, 1989):

- The ontological spatiality of being (we are all spatial as well as social and temporal beings);
- The social production of spatiality (space is socially produced and can, therefore, be socially changed);
- The socio-spatial dialectic (the spatial shapes the social as much as the social shapes the spatial)

The three of them, Lefebvre, Soja and Harvey, led their work towards the subject of “struggle and the right to the city” (Harvey, 2012; Henri Lefebvre, Kofman, & Lebas, 1996). At the same time, analytically they pointed how it was the conflictive space that produced the relations of production. In short, the spatial turn that Lefebvre started revolved around the principle that “it was the space that produced reproduction” (Soja, 1989).

Soja and Harvey both had a background in geography so they were well placed to understand the importance of space in social life and took it to be of primary importance in explaining the rise of urbanity in developed western countries. However, both of them stopped short at Lefebvre’s theory and argued that while space may be seen and accepted as primordially given in society, its organization and most importantly the meaning we assign to it are but products of social transformation, translation, and experience (Harvey, 2012; Soja, 1989). Therefore, for these authors it was of utmost importance to realize that, in the postmodern

world, “socially produced space is a created structure, comparable to other social constructions and as such should be analyzed as a different structure and not be subject to second-hand analysis”. The literature on social production of space was and continues to be preoccupied with building a comprehensive Marxist critical standpoint on space of the capitalist system, analyzing spatiality in industrial capitalist cities, the right to the city, social movements in the city space (for example: (Harvey, 2012; Henri Lefebvre, 2004; Henri Lefebvre et al., 1996; Soja, 1989). This emphasis on the forces of production in capitalist societies has left little place for ethnicity, nationalism, and identity to come up into the analysis of the social production of space.

Other works concerned more directly with ethnicity and ethnic relations on the one hand, and with social space and spatiality of the city on the other hand, explicitly ambition to examine critically how the system, the nationalist rhetoric, and the elite are imposing ethnic spatiality and ethnic division onto space. Although most of these works are anthropological, they are indispensable for sociological and social theory.

Haim Yacobi building on the Lefebvrian three-dimensionality of production space describes the case of the “mixed town” of Lod, Israel (Yacobi, 2008). Yacobi aims to rephrase urban resistance in a city from the actors living in a city where ethnic conflict is of high importance. Central to the idea of the modern city is that it is seen as space ongoing the dynamic combination of confluence, diversity, and conflict (Monterescu & Rabinowitz, 2007) and its association with the concept of the nation enforces border zones of two constructed ethnic groups. For Yacobi (Yacobi, 2008) where there is ethnic nationalism, there will be inevitably spatial and mental divisions between the groups. Apart from the formal mechanisms of nationalist politics which perpetuate this dynamic, there exist informal mechanisms of housing and infrastructure as well as an ongoing struggle between different ethnicities to impose their own identity upon the city. To highlight the expression of the social conflict in spatiality within a city, he uses the Lefebvrian model discussed above, which distinguishes between the conceived, perceived and lived space (Henri Lefebvre, 1991). Analyzing social phenomena of ethnic division through this tri-dialectical model allows the appearance of the

role of spatial protests as another type of alternative to social opposition (Yacobi, 2008). Through ethnographic research Yacobi describes the tangible landscape (perceived space), the way of its organizing, the use of space by the communities, elements of the built environment and infrastructure which directly not only shape our spatial experience but shape our everyday social life. Building on Lefebvre and other social constructivist Yacobi as well emphasizes the fact that spatial organization is not a natural process. On the contrary, spatial organization reflects social conflict, different niches, and power relations. On the same line, the conceptualized space “is a result of epistemological processes that cannot be seen as autonomous from the socio-political contexts” (Henri Lefebvre, 1991). The importance of this lies in the fact that for the authors discussed in this section, the relational processes of perceived space are tied with epistemology. This relational process brings to the fore how space is represented to the people and their everyday life social actions.

Another valuable contribution to the literature on space, ethnicity, and nationalism is that of Fenster Tovi and Yacobi Haim in the publication of *Remembering, Forgetting and City Builders*. The articles within this volume critically explore and conceptualize how urban space is planned, designed and experienced in connection with the politics of identity, ethnicity, collective memory and nationalism, through an analysis of the different settings where “national, ethnic and cultural sentiments, that shape memories and practices of belonging, clash in shaping the urban space” (Yacobi & Fenster, 2010). For these authors, space represents the ground for memories and practices. By viewing space and ethnicity as passive agents and giving more focus on memories and what people make of them, the analyses in this publication fail to properly involve the processual aspect of both ethnic identity and space. Despite this shortcoming, such publications are indispensable in the study of ethnicity and spatiality.

While critical social theory has already demonstrated that the planning and design of urban space in such settings is determined by existing power structures, modernity and nationalism, such works are crucial for placing the focus on both the symbolic and the tangible

construction of place in the city. Moreover this approach opens up an interdisciplinary perspective, which enables the examination of different case studies with varying insights on memory and belonging as expressed through space and urban planning. The analyses in this publication on urban planning, space and architecture are grounded in a socially constructed perspective, which enable the conclusion that, like other cultural representations, the planned landscape is also a symbol of the political power of the state, which struggles to establish a particular collective identity at the cost of repressing others (Swartz, 1997; Vale, 1992).

Ash Amin (Amin, 2002) on the other hand looks at how the civil unrest of 2001 in Britain serves to remind that racism, cultural diversity and ethnicity are intrinsically connected with the geography of the city. Looking at the segregation of the city into ethnical groupings of neighborhoods, Amin goes on to discuss how the contact spaces and the urban public spaces fail to bridge inter-ethnic understanding and relations. According to him, this failure comes from the fact that the type of spaces such as house holding, public space, etc. are not “spaces of inter-dependent and habitual engagement”. What facilitates inter-ethnic relations, on the contrary, is what Les Bak (cited in (Amin, 2002) calls micro-publics, where social relations, communication, dialogue and ethnic identity negotiations become compulsory. Some of such spaces are schools, the workplace, colleges, youth centers and other spaces which facilitate association.

Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (Ferguson, 1992) employ a postmodern lens to look at how the contemporary world of blurred territories, space, transnational and less static identities is confronted with what they call “imagined space” (Ferguson, 1992). Imagined space is the result of a process by which ideas on culturally and ethnically distinct spatiality gain prominence, while the actual physical space of the locality and territory becomes blurred. Therefore as the authors suggest, we can see a direct relation and attachment of the “imagined communities” (Anderson, 2006) to the “imagined spaces”. The imagined places and their remembering have been an anchor for displaced groups such as immigrants, diasporas, refugees, etc. However, imagined spaces have been a factor of ethnic tensions in different

societies, sometimes bound together into a single nation-state. In the Republic of Macedonia, for the Albanian ethnic community part of the country is the imagined space of “Greater Albania.” National, religious and social identity is mostly anchored towards this imagined space in the ethnic group of Albanians in Macedonia.

3.3. Literature on Space and Ethnicity in Macedonia

In the context of ethnic relations in Macedonia, there are not many sociological studies which focus on space, ethnicity, and identity. It is rather the field of anthropology which has entered this field of research in Macedonia. Anthropological studies on ethnicity, nationalism, and city, although not in many numbers, do exist. The work on Goran Janev (Janev, 2011) focusing on the capital city of Skopje is one of the main works on this issue. Throughout the study, he looks at how the top-down nationalist policies on space and city impact the population. Through such analysis, lessons can be drawn for a better understanding of the societal relations in the country.

He discusses thoroughly how a political project on space such as “Skopje 2014” was meant to shape the spatiality of the city and reinforce even more the ethnic identity on the different parts of the city populated by different ethnicities. At the same time, this politicized spatiality was reinforcing ethnicity on the whole population of the country. Dividing the city into ethnic spatial zones awakened the ‘remembering’ of imagined spaces for both ethnicities and not only. The top-down nationalist project on ethnic spatiality cannot be overlooked. Inverting the analysis and looking at it through the ordinary actions of people in their everyday relations can reveal more insights. In Macedonia, ethnicity dominates not only the social world and space but also the physical one. That being said, what Janev reminds us is that notwithstanding the overwhelming top-down ethnopolitics in the country there is resistance to such politics if we carefully examine everyday life closer through spatiality and social life. While the activism in Macedonia against such ethnic politics, with a particular focus to spatial policies (ex: Skopje 2014), is evident in different forms, what is of importance is the use of

spatiality by common people to resist such top-down politics expressed and analyzed in the article by the author.

Focusing specifically on the “Skopje 2014” project he observed social life through analyzing spatial phenomena. This is the closest work to my thesis and an important one on ethnicity, spatiality and social life in the Republic of Macedonia. As he concludes in his study, spatiality is a central aspect of inter-ethnic relations. In the same vein as Lefebvre in his seminal work production of social space, Janev argues that spatiality and social space are where social life happens. Therefore it deserves a better place in the analysis of social issues. For Janev a central focus and concept is narrative space, which for him means “analyzing the consequences of an establishment of an ethnocultural regime and the ways this regime enforces a corresponding social order.” Narrative space is not only a material space but can also be constituted from the immaterial actions of spatial practices, thus not necessarily verbal or literal expressions. In the Republic of Macedonia, and Skopje in particular as his fieldwork, the interest lies in the production of the narrative space from the top down but also of primary concern is to see at the social construction of this same narrative space from the bottom up (Janev, 2011).

Politics in Macedonia, not only through the “Skopje 2014” projects but other laws and policies as well, intervene in the public space with the sole intention to define it along ethnic lines. This is not only done by the Macedonian political elite but also by the Albanian one. Macedonia has turned up into a country where ethnopolitics is the only politics that determine the social and physical boundaries between different members of the society. Such determinism, according to the study, has effects on several complexes in everyday life. On the other hand, the activities in everyday life reflect upon the social construction of a social reality through the process of social production of space. In a country with ethnic groups live along each other, this process results in different spatiality and social reality which need to be added to the analysis.

Janev’s contribution is the only one focusing on the spatial politics in the Republic of Macedonia and ethnic relations in the country. Most of the research about ethnic relations in

Macedonia was and is still focused on identity politics. Moreover, most of the studies with a focus on ethnic relations look at how attitudes of ethnic groups changed towards each other. As mentioned in the earlier sections, the literature and research on ethnic relations in Macedonia focus mostly on cultural difference, the political aspect of agreements in ethnic relations and the attitudes of people on this aspect of life in the country. The work of Goran Janev (Janev, 2011) stands out as an anthropological study of space and narrative.

This surge in research on ethnic relations and attitudes on behalf of the population is not unexplained. After the armed conflict and its peaceful resolution with an agreement from all political parties, politics continues to be defined by mistrust, tensions and disagreements between the groups. Tensions between the two main ethnic groups persist to this day. In a 2010 survey “58% of the respondents saw no change in the state of inter-ethnic relations in the country, while about a quarter (26%) thought they had worsened” (Maleska, 2010).

Inter-ethnic relations continue to be viewed negatively by the young in Macedonia. In the OSCE study report nearly half of the respondents aged between 10 and 14 stated that they had started to develop a negative feeling for the other ethnic groups. As the study notes, the “negative feelings Macedonians and Albanians have for one another are substantially more predominant in comparison to positive feelings” (2010). Influences on these negative feelings come from institutions such as media (23.7%), political parties (43.8%), teachers and education (33.6%) and the perceived cultural differences (44.2%) (OSCE, 2010).

The perceived and lived cultural differences between the two groups, as well as the institutionalization of such differences and distinctiveness, are of prime importance to any analysis concerned with ethnic relations in Macedonia. In the Republic of Macedonia, an essential aspect of social relations is defined by ethnicity, which is as much cultural and political as it is social (Eriksen, 2002). Social life in the anthropological and sociological field means the interaction and actions taking place in everyday life. Ethnicity, together with ethnic identity and ethnic group formation, are to a higher degree created and recreated in the space of everyday life. Essentially, ethnic relations emerge and are made relevant through

social situations and encounters and through people's ways of coping with the demand and challenges of life.

The literature on the post-ethnic violence that erupted in Macedonia is considerable. However, as with other literature, most of this body tends to focus on institutional analysis, on conflict resolution and political solutions. These studies tend to look at the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and its shortcomings. This can be seen about works such as that of (Atanovski, 2008; Aziri, 2008; Bieber, 2008, 2008 ; Mehmeti, 2008). Other studies tend to focus on the development of the situation for the Albanian community through access to public finances and labor market. Moreover they evaluate the outcomes, successes or failures of the agreement in relation to the goal of a building a more multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society (Bexheti, Osmani, Zeqiri, & Aziri, 2011; Elena, Memeti, Redzepi, Rustemi, & Halili, 2011).

Apart from the large number of studies that concern themselves with the implementation of the Framework Agreement, there are some studies which, in light of that implementation, slightly touch on issues of everyday life and space as factors on the ethnic relations. Although none of these studies are focused explicitly on this topic, almost all of them touch upon it as an adverse outcome of the process of the building of multi-ethnic and cultural society.

On the other hand, some studies which investigate education discuss how education in the context of Macedonia serves as tool for separating and segregating the communities. Such are the studies of Murati (Murati, 2008) and Atanasovski (Atanovski, 2008). In both of these articles, the authors touch upon essential concepts which link conflict and education. School segregation and parallel education systems are two themes which emerge from these two studies. Both articles fit in the broader literature of "negative and positive facets" of education. The authors argue that although ethnic Albanians gained more collective rights after the signing of the Framework Agreement, this did not translate into building a more multi-ethnic state. On the contrary, it has widened the gap between the two communities and education plays a significant role in that. This lack of communication between the two ethnic groups, with regard to secondary schools pupils, can be linked to the social construction of two different realities for them: an Albanian one, dominated by Albanian historical

narratives; and a Macedonian one, linked to its historical narratives. Both of these studies focus their analysis on the education policy giving little account to the realities which are present in the education process itself.

A fundamental analysis done with regards to the Macedonian education system is the one conducted by UNICEF Office Skopje (Petroska-Beska, Najcevska, Kenig, Ballazhi, & Tomovska, 2009) which focuses on the capacities the education system has to promote respect, tolerance, and acceptance. Their study peeks beyond the good spirited government policies and legal framework aiming at developing better inter-ethnic communication, and instead examines the reality of these policies by presenting their possible shortcomings.

4. Data and Methodology

This chapter will give an overview of the methodological tools and methods used to address the research question and in the analysis of the data. The debate over the methodological tools and methods is central to any research. Firstly, I unpack the epistemological and ontological discussion around the issue of methodology, before introducing the method used in this study. The two sections following will be a detailed account of the fieldwork experience and the method of participant observation.

4.1. Ethnography

The dichotomy between the quantitative and qualitative methodologies continues to exist in the social sciences, typically translated into a distinction between two philosophical approaches. The distinction refers to positivist and interpretative presuppositions. While the quantitative methods tend to look at large samples, usually combined with statistical analysis, the qualitative methods are more focused on the in-depth study of small groups, issues, and relations which it addresses through an interpretation of meanings, actions, as well as structures and broader explanations.

The nature of this dichotomy is continuously challenged with the emergence of different types of methods that seek to combine various approaches. For instance, triangulation is one of the approaches which goes beyond this dichotomy. Similarly, the validity of large-scale data is sometimes checked through qualitative methods, i.e. by researching a smaller sample of the initial one.

Qualitative methods are increasingly employed in social research. The constructivist ontology and interpretative epistemology, aided by the postmodern wave in philosophy, proved crucial for qualitative methodology. The tools this method engages, ethnography, participant observation, and participant engagement, are vital in grasping meaning and social reality.

The constructivist ontology is an approach which, in contrast to the positivist paradigm, gives primacy to the social context, structures, traditions and discourses in the construction of meanings attached to the social world, actions, artifacts, institutions, etc. When researching ethnicity, social space and everyday life, there is clearly a need for a more in-depth understanding of meanings given by the people to their actions and modes of representation. Qualitative methods such as ethnography and participant observation are tools which can suitably be incorporated into the observation and analysis of social life. Such practices were usually used in explorative studies, and in the study of actors' perceptions, personal meaning and social world of interaction (Dorothy, Shaffir, & Miall, 2005), as they emphasize a subjective, inductive and holistic approach to gathering data and their analysis. The status that ethnography, as a primary bundle of qualitative methods, has within the constructivist paradigm is that through this methodology we acknowledge that the social world is an interpreted world (Alheide & Johnson, 1994).

Together with constructivists' ontology, the hermeneutic epistemology points out the need to focus at the discourses, traditions, and structures which shape meaning and interpretations. It urges us to understand how they do so, instead of what they do. Recognizing the formation of meaning shows the need for the practice of qualitative methodologies as the sole methods which allow for the in-depth understanding of the actions and relations of the actors in a study. Other main tools apart from ethnography used in qualitative methodology include participant observation, which entails that the researcher involves him/herself in the daily life activities and everyday life of the actors in the study. Moreover, semi-structured and unstructured interviews are another primary tool used in qualitative methods to grasp the meanings and interpretations of the social world.

One of the main criticisms against qualitative methods refers to the reliability and replicability of the research. Moreover, the method's failure to extract an objective truth for the society at large is another strong criticism. What these critics fail to grasp is that "clearly there is no pretense to discover universal truths; the most humble and attainable objective is

to explore normative truth in particular settings” (Dorothy et al., 2005).

In the present research, I decided to use ethnography as one of the primary tools of qualitative methodology in the light of the research topic. Ethnography is as the single methodology which can most effective in grasping the reality because of the particular focus given to the social construction of ethnicity in everyday life actions. Ethnography allows the researcher to study a social group more intensively, by immersing oneself in the day-to-day lives of people in that group (Dorothy et al., 2005). Researching everyday life therefore rests on an ethnographic approach. In such research, the emphasis is not on what people should or should not do, but rather on what they do and how they go about these activities. The objective of studying everyday life is to learn about the ways that people, as reflective beings, live and interact with others in the community, and how they give meaning to their (shared) lives.

Methods such as intensive, non-directive and naturalistic interviews in the natural setting, participant observation and documentary analysis of the social life were used during the three months and a half spent in the fieldwork setting of the city. The importance of the direct connection with the research site and the subjects is what makes ethnography a prime tool for studying ethnicity, everyday life, and social space. As Julia Murchison (Murchison, 2010) maintains, ethnographers employ accounts of daily life in different communities, as well as on stories of their own experience in the field work. The ethnographic method and the tools used together with it allow the researcher to observe and experience events, behaviors, interactions, and conversations that are manifestations of society and culture in action.

Apart from offering the opportunity to study real-life situations and human behavior in all its minutiae, ethnography can provide insights into many other issues which might have even not been thought of initially (Dorothy et al., 2005). Methods like ethnography guide the researcher into gaining a unique understanding of the context and thought that informs that behavior. It is its particular position and strategy that makes this method an exciting and insightful one. It is this same dominant position which prompt the many questions and issues

raised in relation to ethnography, some already mentioned such as reliability or replicability. Another important matter is the role of the researcher in what is called the natural setting of the study. Reflexivity by ethnographers is an indispensable part of the research nowadays and together with gathering and recording data or information throughout the project, the researcher inevitably evaluates and critiques that same information and his position in relation to that knowledge.

Researching Macedonia was a fascinating undertaking. Before leaving, everything seemed to be ready. My initial idea of investigating the social construction of the ethnic relation and the pivotal role of the education was becoming increasingly exciting. Everything I was reading from books, articles and newsfeeds was feeding my interest in this research. My expectations about the findings also built my dream as a young research regarding the impact of that trip. Just a few weeks before leaving I managed to get a placement on an internship with the help of university funding. I was going to be an intern in a youth organization which worked toward building intercultural dialogue in the city of Kumanovo. This position was of great help in the ethnographic fieldwork I was embarking on because it would allow me to be in direct contact with some of the leading actors in the area I wanted to study.

I conceived of ethnography as the primary tool for this research from the very beginning because it is a method which allows the researcher to get embedded in her field and understand the deep meaning of the actors' actions. Moreover, it enables the researcher to see beyond mere words and answers in surveys or questionnaires. It creates the ground to understand better and know the situation and complex environment in which the actions happen. Thus, ethnography and participant observation were the prime tools and methods to reveal and help in the quest of social actions by people in the setting of stranded ethnic relations such as those in Macedonia.

4.2. Participant Observation

A central role of any ethnographic research is to describe and understand people's actions and the social meaning they give to it. Participant observation is a primary tool in unveiling this. Moreover, it is frequently used in research to show how the actors makes sense of their social environment.

During the ethnographic research I conducted in Macedonia, I saw fit to use more than one tool. By way of diversifying my data collection, I used participant observation, as well as formal and informal interviews with some the participants. I also employed a basic virtual ethnography and geographical mapping to visualize the research.

Participant observation is a distinct approach to ethnography, which moves beyond observation from afar or behind the glass and moves the researcher directly into the research context (Murchison, 2010). In their publication *Doing Ethnography: Studying everyday life*, Pawluch et al., assert this technique's advantage. According to them "in contrast to just observation, participant observation role offers the researcher more sustained contact with the people in the setting and provides valuable opportunities for the researcher to learn about and inquire into the viewpoints, practices, and adjustments of others in the setting" (Dorothy et al., 2005). During the four months I spent in the city, I gathered most of my information through this kind of first-hand research. Being able to use both participant observation and ethnography allowed me to attach and detach myself during the stay in the city with different actors, some of whom I met only once, some for different periods of time. The diversity of the tools used to gather data enriched further the specter of the research and analysis.

Being from Albania, I could speak the semiofficial language spoken by a considerable community in Kumanovo. Thus, one of the obstacles of participant observation, language, was overcome quickly. The lack of Macedonian language skills was resolved by using the English language extensively during my field research. Many of the conversations with Macedonians I had in English while almost every interaction with Albanians I held in Albanian. The Albanian language spoken in Kumanovo is the northern dialect of Albanian

and as such it was sometimes difficult for me to understand some localized slang used. These, however, were minor misunderstandings and were resolved *ad hoc* by questions and answers.

Participant observation gave me the possibility to research by creating a natural interaction with the other actors that are part of the study. Communication took many different forms, from informal talks, informal interviews, talking during work, doing projects together to unexpected discussions with various other actors, in short to sharing different rituals with the actors.

At the same time, as an ethnographer, I could detach myself, although not entirely from the rituals and interaction with the other people. This detachment allowed me to explore and examine cultures and societies that are a fundamental part of that human experience (Murchison, 2010). Participant observation establishes the direct connection of the researcher with the site and its subjects. This direct link was indispensable in studying ethnicity, everyday life, and social space, with a particular focus on their social construction. The technique of participant observation allowed for gathering data and recordings in a more comprehensive manner than the traditional ways of collecting data through interviews alone. The observation of space, buildings, national symbols in the physical space, together with drawings and graffiti were some of the issues which could not have been touched upon without this technique. Moreover, this method offers a free hand to the researcher in the design of the process and a way of observing that enables the freedom to shift the focus of research so as to fit the findings.

Observing the city itself through living the life of one of its citizens gave me many valuable insights for which formal interviews would have been insufficient. Informal talks, discussions in bars, in the parks or car rides gave not only firsthand useful information but also strengthened the position and the ability of this technique to illuminate essential understandings and ways in which people employ that knowledge, everyday life, the space of the city and rituals.

The primary challenge of participant observation has to do with the ethics of research. The debate over overt or covert participant observation has long been in the social sciences. The

question of informed consent introduces a lively and ongoing discussion on ethics in qualitative research. Thus, while the ethics of social research plays down the use of covert research with view to the issue of informed consent, the risk of influencing the fieldsite with overt research is higher than the covert.

During the three months and a half of ethnography and participant observation, I made my identity as a researcher thoroughly apparent. In every conversation, my status came up during the flow of conversation. “*What are you doing in the city*” was a common first question I was getting from almost everyone. Naturally, my answer was to say that apart from doing an internship at a local Youth NGO, I was researching the topic of ethnicity, young people, and life in the city. Although, as is usually the case with ethnographic methodology, researchers using this method as they begin their research rarely know where they will end up, I managed to make it clear what I wanted to research and that what I might use from what we discussed. Getting signed informed consent paper was most of the time impossible since the setting and environment together with the situation did not allow it. Nevertheless, the verbal agreement of many of them could be understood by many of the actors and subjects of the city saying they were happy to hear I was researching. Most of the time the topic of ethnicity, space and city came up unexpectedly during a random conversation, usually started by some of my interlocutors themselves without me directing any of the dialogue towards it. I would like to give an example to share the randomness of the diversion of the topic into city, ethnicity, and youth. The below extract is from the notes I was keeping in my notebook which usually wrote down before going to bed every night.

“Today I was at Blashgir⁴ for a drink with my two other volunteer friends from America...One of their friends, a Macedonian girl and some other friends of hers, joins us at the bar and after I introduce myself, she asks me what do I do here. I said I am an intern at XYZ (the youth NGO) and that I am here because I am writing my master’s thesis and doing

⁴ A bar in the city center, just next to the Garzon structure. The bar was the „home” of many alternative culture and people heavily involved with NGOs.

research. I briefly explained my research, and then we started talking with other people. Lately, I approached her again and asked her what she does; as an architect, she rejoiced the fact that I was from Gjirokastra in Albania [my hometown in Albania]. Her interest in Ottoman architecture had familiarized her with this region. The discussion on Ottoman architecture brought us closer to our location, Kumanovo. “I like places like Albania because it’s not like here, where all buildings are the same. The only difference is that some are situated in Albanian side, some in Macedonian side”. “City space and division is what is harming the youth in the city by keeping them away from each other”, she continued, bringing the discussion from purely speaking about old architecture and tourism to ethnic politics and city space.

This passage is meant to show that most of the time the flow of talk, and usually informal talk, led to the issue of ethnicity. This was not usually by design, or the initial topic; the discussion swayed to this direction spontaneously. Nevertheless, almost in all the cases, ethnicity, city and ethnic politics were talked about in relation to the city.

The passage also shows the strength of the participant observation as a tool in gathering data for such research. Through natural settings like this the actors are more relaxed and could talk more about issues that are not pushed onto them. Instead, the issue comes up by itself, without the researcher bringing it to the fore. Participant observation allows for information of this kind to emerge by itself in context, in the same way it would with people who are not researchers.

At the same time the passage indicates the reasons behind the choice of using informal talks, interviews and discussions as data for this thesis. As already described, many of the participants were reluctant to discuss these issues on a formal interview, with notebook and microphone. However, this was not an issue when the discussion was informal. For this reason, in the course of my fieldwork I decided to make use of the informal setting instead. The participants were always informed about my intention and my purpose of stay in the country. They were also informed about my method of gathering data prior to the

conversation or during the conversation.

4.3. During the Fieldwork

I arrived in Kumanovo, the city I was going to spend the next three to four months, during the night after a long trip which involved a plane, a train, and a bus. On the night I arrived two people from the organization where I was going to complete my internship—the president of the organization and one of the project coordinators—waited for me at the bus station of the city and then drove me to my accommodation. As a first-timer in that city, although it was night and dark, I kept my head out of the window of the car looking at the city, the streets, and the people on both sides.

At one of those moments when my eyes were glaring at the lighted buildings, I saw a square, and the president of the organizations said to me: *“we are just at the center of the city. On your left is the Albanian side and on the right and up here where we are going is the Macedonian side. Down where we came from is a community mostly populated by Roma”*. These were the second words said to me by them after the greetings at the station. And these words would reflect a lot upon me and the course of this research.

They did not sound that harsh in my ears the moment she told me the information, but the next morning, they would come back to me even stronger after the first walk in the city.

The next morning I went to the office to meet the other people of the organization. After meeting everyone and getting to know a bit more about the environment where I was going to work, I went out for a city treasure hunt. It was a practice used by the organization with other volunteers and international staff. It was seen as a practice for the foreign people to get to know more and discover the city. However, for me, it became more than that: a big bubble with many questions to be answered. That treasure hunt put into doubt the idea of my research or to be more precise the need of it. A treasure hunt which takes you from one side to the other, from one culture to another, from one social reality to another, from a set of social practice and relations to another. It was a treasure hunt which brought to me with great force

the words I was told the night before, regarding where each ethnic group was and the spaces they were supposed to occupy.

That late morning and early afternoon I walked all over the city experiencing the divide, the diversity, the difference, the politics and the ethnic relations and everything else which would follow me during my stay there.

As part of the treasure hunt activity organized by the NGO, I had to find spots of the city in both the Albanian side and Macedonian one. For this activity, I had to interact with people in the city so as to be able to find the places. However, not everyone I asked knew about these spots by the same name. The names differed, and the history behind them varied as well, so the relation that people had with these places and spaces varied according to which ethnic background they were supposed to belong. Each of the sides sometimes had their name of the same spots. Some people did not even know of some history or people of the city, which were the landmark for the other ethnic group.

During the months of the fieldwork, I experienced the city in many ways. One of these ways was to walk through the different “sides“ of town: from the Macedonian one to the Albanian side through the Roma settlement, and back. Moreover, I visited many surrounding Albanian villages which are conjoined to the city municipality but which were not part of it before the Ohrid Agreement and the new decentralization aimed at giving Albanian community over 25% residence to be able to have the official language and organize culturally in the municipality. I traveled extensively across the country, from north to south and east to west, from Macedonian regions to Albanian regions. The experience you get when visiting the country north to south is a significant one.

In one of these travels from north to south I took to counting how many of the villages we passed by on the road one could recognize as Albanian or Macedonian. The ethnic symbolic boundaries, the spatial formation of communities, the banal nationalism, and cultural expressions were some of the tools to recognize the different villages. The small experiment was impressive. Almost all the villages had a spatial sign through which their ethnic identity

could be recognized. Such a small experiment showed the wide reach of the ethnicization process that a more extensive ethnography in the whole country can reveal.

During my fieldwork in the city of Kumanovo, I was living in an apparently “*very Macedonian*” neighborhood, in the limits of the city. From other people I managed to know that it is the “most Macedonian” one and that maybe it is smart not to say that I am Albanian in that neighborhood. During the fieldwork, I experienced many times the advice of “do not say that you are Albanian here” as a fear from the verbal or physical attack on me. This advice was given to me by all: Albanians from Albania, Albanians from the Albanian community there, Macedonians and also French, Americans or Germans volunteering in the country. The most interesting of all was the fact that volunteers from European countries would give me such a piece of advice during the fieldwork. Adjunct with this advice was my apparent association with Finland made by many Macedonians in the Garnizon bars. In some of the Macedonian bars I frequented from time to time the bartender, or other people there, would call me the Finnish guy than rather the Albanian guy, although they knew I was Albanian, but only studied in Finland. There were cases where I was introduced as the Finnish guy by them, indirectly and unconsciously giving me the same advice as others: “*Do not say you are Albanian.*”

Another meaningful observation during fieldwork connects to the graffiti present on the city walls. More than graffiti arts, these were average sprays on the walls usually demarcating the ethnic space of the city and neighborhoods. More than ever you would know which side you were on judging from the drawings on the wall. These drawings bore the name from two football fan groupings in the city: The Albanian team supporters and the Macedonian team supporters. The “ethnitization” process in these two groups was obviously very advanced, and many times there were violent clashes, portraying the wider clashes happening in other cities in Macedonia between such football fans. In such groups, the feelings and identity of ethnicity and nationhood are much stronger because it is sharpened even more from the football association into it. Other studies exist in sociology on these groups. While in the

fieldwork in Kumanovo there were two clashes involving young people and violence. However what was interesting was that there was a wider call by one of the groupings of “boycotting” Macedonian businesses in the Garnizon area since some of them fueled it and protected the attackers of the young Albanians in the football grouping.

My stay in the city happened to be the month of fasting of Ramadan. Religion is an essential part of the identity of the Albanian community in Macedonia and especially in Kumanovo. In Macedonia since the 1991 referendum and liberalization of the country after communist Yugoslavia, religion has increased its role in the identity and boundary marker between ethnic groups. Albanians are Muslims while Macedonians are Christian Orthodox. The two “groups” created after the independence in 1991 became apparent when you heard about the Albanian Christian Catholics in the country who by now were “extinct” as they had to associate either with Albanian Muslims or The Christian Macedonians. The Ramadan days during my fieldwork were another critical experience of the diversity in the city space and the everyday life of people. The two social spaces of the city had their contrast furthered during the days of Ramadan.

As part of my stay in Kumanovo, I was doing an internship with the youth association in the city, and that helped me exceptionally not only to build networks but also to fit myself into the rhythm of the people in the city. As part of the internship I researched how the different projects of the organization increased or decreased intercultural dialogue. I was in direct contact with young people from both the Albanian community and the Macedonian one through taking part in the online radio run by the organization. Being in touch with youngsters in such organization on intercultural dialogue was a window for me to get direct insight on the real intercultural dialogue between the young people who are part of this team and in direct contact between themselves. It allowed me to observe and be part of this dialogue and the ethnic relations in place.

The internship and the fieldwork gave me the possibility to participate in different workshops organized by the youth center. Young people from the Albanian community and the

Macedonian one frequented these workshops. In August, a team I was part of organized a hiking day in the beautiful nature of the outer city to bring together young people from the city and discuss forms of inclusion, contact and intercultural dialogue. The one day hike was another portrayal of the broader inter-ethnic relations in the country and a mirror of the analysis which will come in the further sections of this research.

4.4. Formal and Informal Interviews

During August, I scheduled six interviews with several young people. These meetings were seen as decisive additions data on the observation I had made until then with my fieldwork in Kumanovo, Macedonia. The conducted observation until then was mostly through informal talks and mapping of city space. As necessary as they were, I feared they might prove insufficient. These interviews would help me further to achieve a better and deeper understanding of the social issues I had faced in my observations. The interviews were thought of primarily as testing what I had observed and heard from the different formal and informal talks.

Through my internship position, I had managed to create several networks with young people in the city. Many of them were taking part in the activities organized by the association, but which furthered my network more. I told several people that I wanted to do some interviews which would help me in my research. Nevertheless not every one of them replied to my invitation, as it usually happens with face to face interviews. In total, I managed to organize open-ended interviews with 7 participants.

In some of the interviews organized two interlocutors would participate, arguing that since they were friends, they would like to be together as they talk with me about ethnic relations. Two of these participants who came along together were girls in their last year of high school. One of them had participated in an activity of the association while the other girl was the friend who replied to my invitation. Two of the other participants were two boys who responded to my request for the interview through one of the project coordinators of the

association. I had never met these two boys before. In another interview, the talk stated face to face with one participant. However, later another boy joined the conversation and our company. The other girl who was interviewed was a face to face interview.

The setting of the interviews differed a lot from each other because I decided to let them choose the place. In two cases, however, the participants would not tell me any site since they seemed to be shy. So, in that case, we had the interviews in the youth center which was near the Albanian side of the town and where they had been before for different pieces of training and workshops. That was the main reason why I decided to choose that as the setting for the interview since it was a known place for them. Moreover, the youth center, being in between the two “sides” of the town, acted as a spatial marker for me as well. The location was an essential factor in the setting of the interviews when studying space and ethnic spatiality as it allows for people’s reaction and comments when suggesting different places. The location of the setting of the interview moreover can be taken as a separate analysis of the fear and the interview process in which a lot of people decided to come in couples and also not be recorded.

The two interviews organized in the youth center could not be voice recorded so as to allow their analysis through the transcript. The participants seemed reluctant to be taped and talk in front of the recorder, although I suggested I could hide it from view. They appeared “frightened” by the recorder, which in reality was a smartphone, a choice made to decrease the same “fear of microphone” which nevertheless happened. They seemed from the start a bit curious and intimidated by the interview, although my approach to it was a friendly one of just chitchatting for the first 15 minutes. No topic of any ethnic relations or research issues were brought up in the beginning. Not being able to record the interviews posed a problem for me regarding the transcript and the quotes I could jot down. Nevertheless, I managed to write down a summary with some exact quotes immediately after the interview. Moreover, the decision for not being recorded and the reluctance and intimidation from the interview are further data in the thesis taking into account the issue and the topic of the research.

Location, space, the environment can all be fruitful data and further analyzed in a qualitative interview.

In the two other interviews which were individual ones again the choice was given to the participants to decide upon the place of meeting. The settings chosen by them were Albanian coffee bars in the Garnizon location in the center of the city. The Garnizon was a contested social space, especially between the young generations of the town of Kumanovo. An old four-stories building now accommodated the many places where all the youth of the town would gather. Coffee bars, pubs, restaurants, confectionaries, and shops were located in this building. This space seemed more like a beehive of youngsters with bars (ethnically divided of course) playing the music louder than the other. As already mentioned, each floor of the structure was composed of ethnically divisive bars, Albanian and Macedonian, respectively. Virtual boundaries were apparent between them, but also physical barriers were there. The choice of the setting was even more important for me than the interview I had with the participants. In one of the interviews (with the boy) 30 minutes after starting the interview and talking a friend of his just sat down next to us and joined in our conversation. He knew that I had a meeting. Nevertheless, he wanted to join us, he said.

All of the interviews were semi-structured and were thought of as more informal talks trying not to influence any of the participants by channeling them but creating a flow of the conversation with only topics in mind of how to channel the discussion rather than asking direct questions to the participants. This decision was taken because talking about mundane, everyday topics would reveal much more rather than directly asking what participants thought of this or that question. Moreover, by creating an environment of informal talks and mundane everyday topics, my purpose was to see how often issues of space, ethnicity, boundaries came up in the conversation or whether they did not come at all.

These were some of the grounds that attracted me to look into Macedonia. Starting my research on ethnic relations in the country, I found out that most of the area academics were

focusing on politics, institutions, laws affirming the multiculturalism, etc. There was an absence of the sociological or anthropological input on the issue of ethnicity in the country. Or, when there were such sociological studies the focus was on how to improve the ethnic relations by looking at the implementation of the Framework agreement, the authors taking for granted the concept of ethnicity, ethnic groups and relationships and not looking beyond them.

I started to look at the ethnic groups of Albanian or Macedonian or Turkish for that matter by critically looking at such concepts and other institutions. This ethnographic presence in Macedonia, initiated in me the strength to look beyond what the academia had investigated until now in the field of ethnicity. Of course, this research is a small one, and further inquiry, with more extensive ethnographic data, is needed, nevertheless this work can be a good starting point in looking beyond ethnicity its taken for granted nature, especially with view to Macedonia and the Balkans, and consider its deconstruction. Future research will enable more minute analyses of the importance of social constructionism and everyday life processes. Furthermore, it will open the door for the inclusion of space in theoretical chapters of social constructionism. The mundane actions have been disregarded in most of the studies on Macedonian ethnic relations. It is that mundane and routine, and the understanding of it, that is essential to uncover the processes and actions that construct and reconstruct ethnicity and are fueled by mistrust, fear, tension, etc.

5. Analysis: The production of social ethnic space in Kumanovo

5.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present and analyze the data gathered from ethnography, participant observation, informal and formal talks and face-to-face interviews. The wide range of data gathered is an indispensable advantage for this analysis. At the same time, it addresses the reliability factor of the research with its question mark on whether the given answers were in any way influenced by the positionality of the researcher. Much of the informal talks, although informed with regard to my research, were not focused on the issue of ethnicity or what was being researched. On the contrary, the issue was brought up spontaneously by the locals of the city.

As explained in the data collection section, fieldwork was conducted in four months and across the entire city environment. Throughout the fieldwork, many events happened and many data collected helped shape the direction of the analysis. This thesis picks three main events from the time spent on fieldwork where both spatiality and ethnic relations interplay. These events create the space where the theoretical perspectives discussed can shed light to further understanding. The distinction discussed by Lefebvre (1991) on the production of social space, already addressed in the literature review, lived, perceived and conceived spaces (Karner, 2007; Henri Lefebvre, 1991; Schmid, 2008; Yacobi, 2008) is used to discuss the production of social space in Kumanovo. This type of analysis aims at explaining the production of social spaces in Kumanovo as an everyday social action which is complexly tied to ethnicity and ethnic relations. The discussion that follows here cannot be uncoupled from the previous chapters where ethnic relations, everyday life, as well as the historical background were discussed.

The chapter starts by presenting how social space is conceived by the people of Kumanovo.

The nationalist politics and other top-down measures will be discussed to show the process of conceiving the social space. Attention will be paid to how social space was conceived in Kumanovo through the political and historical events of the Ohrid Agreement which brought peace as well as division. The construction of ethnicity and ethnic identity plays a big part in how people imagine this difference in their social spaces. Further on the chapter will look at the role that the conceived space plays in the everyday life of people through fear. The building of *Garzon* in the center of the city will be discussed in the framework of “perceived space” of Lefebvre (1991) and Schmidt (2004). An analysis of the different floors of the building and the social processes they represent will couple the perceiving of space together with how people structure their social space. The final section of the chapter will focus on discussing how the communities live the spatial division and ethnic relations. Unequal economic development, and the different “lived spaces” in the various neighborhoods will be addressed to close this chapter.

5.2. Conceiving Social Space and Ethnicity in Kumanovo

The city of Kumanovo, like many other cities, towns, and villages in western Macedonia, has a pervasive multi-ethnic history. The importance of ethnicity has changed through time, culminating in being a lived notion nowadays across the city space. The ethnicization of space emerged in Kumanovo the same way it did on other parts of Macedonia. What is essential to mention is that the emergence of the ethnic social space did not happen over an extended period of time, as many might assume; on the contrary, it was a relatively fast process which started to unfold on a slow pace before the 2001 conflict and then rapidly increased with the signing of the Ohrid Framework agreement on multiculturalism and peace.

This section will not discuss or analyze the Framework Ohrid Agreement and its consequences on the ethnic relations. That has been examined extensively elsewhere (Bieber, 2008; Mehmeti, 2008; Vankovska, 2006). What is missing from those analyses is the impact the agreement had on people's everyday life and spatiality. The beginning of the conflict marked the different way people conceived of the space in which they lived. How people talk about space during this time differed from previous discourses. Other spheres of life, such as education and economy, began to be spatialized accordingly as well.

In the city, the construction of ethnicity has been a two-way process. It gets constructed through top-down policies as well as from below. While the downward structures of the state and political have been very successful in constructing the images of the ethnic groups their persistence cannot be explained by them alone. The power of the state apparatus in constructing the group is undisputable. Moreover one should not downplay the role of media in constructing these identities.

The violence which erupted in 2001 in the villages surrounding the city of Kumanovo increased the distrust and fear between the communities which already existed under the influence of the state and media. What separated the two communities though was not the existing political discourse reinforced by the media and the government. Instead, it was the

peace agreement signed in the city of Ohrid that pitted the communities against one another rather than bring them together. Some of the outcomes of this agreement continue to be felt today in the country because of the negative impact they have on the everyday social life of communities.

During fieldwork, I hardly heard the name of the agreement being mentioned, yet people would discuss its consequences very extensively. As it happens, people undermined the role of this agreement in their group separation. They saw rather that the division was bound to happen in the future, one way or another. They regarded it as a natural development when two communities were exclusive towards each other. The violence that erupted in 2001 was seen as an outcome of these two communities' living side by side.

The question arises what exactly was included in the Peace framework that had this impact on how people conceive spatiality and the city. One of the main clauses in the agreement dealt with the use of the Albanian language in the country. Its unofficial status and the limitations placed on its usage motivated one of the main demands in the peace talks.

Language use was one of the main factors why the Albanian community, at large, supported the violence. They saw it as the only way to achieve the demands. As discussed already in the previous chapters, some of the earlier ethnic conflicts between the Albanian community and the Macedonian state were on issues of language and national symbols such as flags. People in Kumanovo continue to remember the clashes at the University of Tetovo, the first university in the Albanian language opened and not recognized by the state. Its unrecognized status led to violent clashes when the government issued demanded its forceful closure.

Consequently, one of the leading demands of the negotiations, representing the general feeling was that the Albanian language be recognized as an official language of the country. *"We were here before and continue to be part of this country; we should be able to use our language officially"* mentioned L.K on one of our walks towards the center of the city. He followed by telling that they *"are nearly half the population in the city... and many other cities and towns are over the half populated by Albanians."*

As it usually occurs in negotiations, a middle point must be reached to achieve an agreement. The concluded Framework agreement did elevate the status of Albanian to a semiofficial language. However, it did so by invoking spatiality and territory. “The Albanian language was to gain official status in those constituencies where the community made up more than 22% of the total population” (Agreement, 2001).

During the negotiations, feelings of fear and distrust between the communities increased considerably. Mainly it was a result of the dragging of the peace process between the two ethnic political stakeholders. In this period, displacement within Kumanovo and in its surrounding villages and settlements paced rapidly. Discussing this moment in the city, *F.K* reminded me that “*before the conflict the neighborhoods were mixed and you could not draw a proper line of ethnic neighborhoods*”. *E.V* too, while driving with me to another location, brought up to me the fact that “*villages that I see now full of Albanian flags were once mixed and a lot of Macedonians lived there... But to make up 23 % and be able to use language as well as fear of Macedonians led to them moving to Macedonian villages*”.

E.V without knowing had referred another crucial article of the Ohrid agreement. This article was directly linked to the status of the language. It postulated the need for the redrawing of constituencies. This in practice meant grouping Albanian communities under the same constituency to pave the way for the language status and other group rights. These two articles indirectly prepared the ground for the two communities to conceive the spaces of the city differently from each other. It was such indirect consequences that have further deepened the ethnic divide across the country. The media, already divided between ethnic lines, widened the gap, causing the Albanian language to reach another level in the constitution. A split media in an isolated space began to build the divide between communities in the coming years.

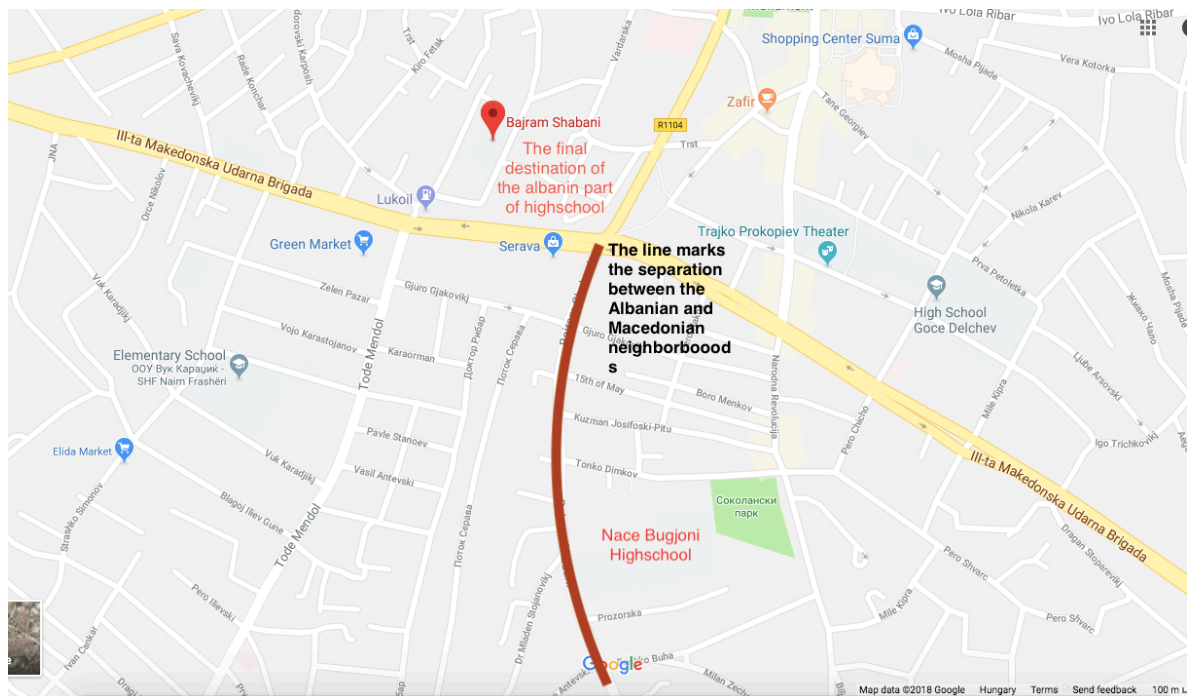
The most evident example to experience this interplay of spatial divide and ethnicity after the violence in the country is educational institutions. Of particular focus for this thesis is the Vocational School of “Nace Bugjoni” and the elementary school “Naim Frasheri”. The

two institutions are two prime examples of how social space took an increasingly vital role in the life of population starting from an early age. Moreover, it is crucial to understanding the importance of how the communities conceived space, trialectically with the lived and perceived space, leading to the creation of the existing social space (Brubaker, 2004; Kanishka, Kipfer, Milgrom, & Schmid, 2008; Karner, 2007; Henri Lefebvre, 1991, 2004, 2008; Schmid, 2008; Yacobi, 2008).

The vocational high school “*Nace Bugjoni*” had moved premises three times since the conflict of 2001, as the headmaster recounted during our interview. In reality, the school was separated into two parts, an Albanian language division and a Macedonian one. The Albanian language division was the one that moved premises during the last years while remaining officially part of the Macedonian vocational school. In fact, there is only one institution with that name and official status. The post-conflict solution was that the school would hold the classes in the Albanian language in a completely different side of the town and with only Albanian-speaking students. The reason being that the mixture of students in the (then) situation of the country would have resulted in violence inside the school. Violence had erupted in some cases in the school between young men from both communities. The headmaster mentioned that many parents had decided not to send their children to school because of the fear of violence. Most importantly in the turmoil of those months to affect the decision of parents not to send their children to the school was that the “*school premises were in the Macedonian neighborhood.*”

The emergence of spatiality had begun when communities demarcated the territories of the city in ethnic terms in their social life. For the parents, it was of utmost importance to send their children to school only if the school would be situated in an area that they considered spatially Albanian. The emergence of space is very important in this example because it touches on all the aspects that one can extrapolate from Lefebvre (Henri Lefebvre, 1991). The school premises moved more than once. This happened mainly because the salience of spatiality was different between the social and official (governmental) level. At the level of society’s everyday life ethnic space meant that political and public life was to be on

different sides of the stories. The separation was conceived through fear. Both communities closed their territories in the post-conflict months and years due to fear of further violence. The only meeting point was the Square in the city center and the Garzon building (coffee and shop area). Although the two locations seem like a meeting point for the two ethnic spaces, the next section on living space will show otherwise.



The location of the Albanian and Macedonian parts of the school and the dividing line between neighborhoods

The displacement of the school happened in stages. The first step included only the separation of the building, by wall and fences. The two student communities were forced to stop their direct contact due to fear of violence. Despite this, the neighborhood was considered predominantly Macedonian space by the community. The streets, the houses, the shops, the taxis, the graffiti in the walls all reminded that the space of this city is not “yours”. The Education authorities decided to make the Albanian language part of the institution more central. This new location was closer to the Albanian conceived space of

the city but it continued to be in the spatial everyday life of the other community. The director mentioned that although many started to send the children to school because the school itself was safe now, the preoccupation of the parents was the way to reach school. During these months violence between the youngsters moved from the classes to the street. The consequence was increasing fear and stronger borders in the conceiving of space and everyday life. The community chose again to abandon the institution bringing with it a new move for the institution, this time in the heart of the Albanian community area. The school has been situated since within the communities' space and everyday social life. Violence has ceased and with it any contact within the two communities' youngest generation. The contact between the groups seems to happen only in the city center where the social spaces of the communities meet. However, as will be discussed further, a different type of contact happens which might not result in necessarily positive outcomes.

The other school brought into the discussion has not changed its premises. The high school was from its start a separate institution with the Albanian language as the language of instruction. Located in an area of the Albanian neighborhood bordering the Macedonian one, the school's symbolic boundaries are put in place to keep reminding students of their identity through the waving flags of the ethnicity (Billig, 1995; Hutchinson & Smith, 1996). Although different from the previous example discussed, "Naim Frasheri" secondary school shows yet again how the two groups conceived of the space after the outbreak of ethnic violence. The conceiving of the social space in this context is similar to the previous example and led to the same outcomes for the two communities.

The "Naim Frasheri" school is situated next to one of the main streets of Kumanovo, connecting the central square, the Macedonian Neighborhood, and the Albanian one. The school is situated in part of the town mostly associated with the Albanian space. It is less than 200 meters away from the roundabout which is the connecting point of the three main streets where the different neighborhoods begin. Next to it is the "Green market," the most famous vegetable market of the city which is mostly used by the Albanian farmers. The market at the roundabout is a space visited by the other ethnic groups too. It is a space of

commerce and trade and as such is not exclusive, although it continues to be imagined as an Albanian space of the town. The Green Market is yet another location and space that would require a whole different type of interdisciplinary ethnographic research.

On the other side of the roundabout, the Macedonian part of the neighborhood starts. The symbolic signifier is a Macedonian bar, its sign written all in Cyrillic. The Albanian part of the town begins where the signifier is the name of the school “Naim Frasheri” written in big Latin alphabet. Between the two as mentioned is the Green Market buffer zone. While the third main exit of the big roundabout coming perpendicular to the buffer zone leads to the central square of Kumanovo, another territory where ethnicity and space are lived relationally.

Speaking to the headmaster of the school during a visit, he emphasized that in no time were there any discussions of displacing the school, as it happened with “Nace Bugjoni”. For the headmaster and other people of the community, the location of the school in the Albanian part had to be maintained more than ever in order not to lose the spaces of this community within the city. Like the headmaster, many young adults who had attended the school in the years before the violence spoke with nostalgia of the diversity existing then. They would remember how once the Albanian community could envisage the space to use in their everyday life further than the roundabout. “Before the starting of clashes in Likove (the village where the 2001 conflict started), many Albanians had houses beyond the roundabout”. However, coupled with the conflict, ethnic identity became more pervasive in the everyday life of people. At the same time, ethnic groupness reinforced itself as a crucial bond for the people and it rose above the other denominators such as social class. Ethnic boundaries of *us* and *them*, the boundaries creating the ethnicities and identities Barth discussed in 1967, became physical ones by including spatiality and territory. For many, this is a story heard and told many times. The existence of Albanian houses beyond the roundabout was a reality less than 15 years ago. While many know these stories as told over and over again, others have experienced the move. Although very young at that time, they retell the experience when their families decided to move to the Albanian “territory”

(part) of the town.

During this period the young generation of students at the same school conceived of their social space very differently. The mixture of the neighborhoods turned more homogenous. These changes influenced the new emergence of spatiality among the students and community connected to the school. The difference from previous periods was that social spaces were not initially as ethnically homogenous as they turned after the conflict. For the community in the current days, spaces of the city and the everyday life of people were ethnicized just as other spheres of life such as economy, politics, and media. *“Many believe that they can be their ethnic group only in these spaces, that only here they can draw their Albanian graffiti’s, can live their everyday social life as the rest of the group... that they can be Albanians”* said XH.L.

The older generations, such as the headmaster and the other teachers present during my visit to the school, saw social space in a different realm from now. It was a constant mention that before there was a different time where communities were closer together although they had the same differences they have now.

“Now,” one of the teachers said *“many of our students do not even know Slavic language to communicate with the other young people even if they have the space to do it.”*

The case of educational institutions’ crucial role in the social construction of ethnicity is in no way understated in this thesis. This part of the analysis of ethnic relations, however, will need a whole new research. The present research instead tries to bring to a new level of appearance the crucial role of space in ethnic relations. These two cannot be taken into a void analysis from each other as I mentioned already in the above example. The lived spaces of the city cannot be understood without the mundane everyday life, schooling life included, of the actors in the city (Atanovski, 2008; Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Burr, 1995; Hobsbawm, 1992; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Ignatieff, 1994).

The young generation of the people of Kumanovo born after 1986 and who lived through the independence from Yugoslavia and the 2001 conflict, are the generation which has experienced the shift in the educational institution and spatial ethnicity as envisioned in the

“Ohrid spirit of multiculturality.” (Czymmeck, 2011; Danforth, 1997; Engstrom, 2002; Neofotistos, 2007; Petroska-Beska & Najcevska, 2004; J. Pettifer, 2001).

But what is more important is that this generation and the ones after, are the actors who experience not only the social space shift but also the everyday life shift coupled with the social relation, networks, and space. *“When I was in school, we were Albanian and Macedonians together, and in my class, I had a lot of Albanian friends”* would say a lot of young Macedonians and Albanians during different discussions. Now the young people do not have any contact with the other group. The only Albanians I met in Kumanovo who had some connection, although an insufficient one, were participants in the organization's workshops and programmes. Social relations are produced through mundane and the everyday life actions in space. With the separation in the city of Kumanovo, there are two different realities with separate everyday life, in separate social spaces.

5.3. Perceiving the ethnic space and its boundaries.

“I have contact with a Macedonian guy ... he lives in my village, and we take the same bus to school, but I don’t talk much with him.” XH.K

Throughout this thesis, I maintain that space cannot be seen as an independent physical entity, but a social product of relations. This social product, as all other social products, is fundamentally bound to social reality. The conceived space I have discussed above is just one aspect of this social product. The second element of the social production of space is the “spatial practice” (Kanishka et al., 2008; Henri Lefebvre, 1991; Schmid, 2008). The spatial practice, or the perceived space, is a notion which puts the emphasis on the tangible space, how space is organized in the built environment and how this spatial organization relates to the dimension of social activity and interaction. Thus, this dimension of the social production of space deals with the functionality of space and infrastructure and the effects it has on social interaction. Usage and organization of spatial practice are fundamental elements that shape the spatial experience of the subject in the whole process of production of space. In other words, analyzing the perceived space means looking at how space is used in the city of Kumanovo on the everyday life of the citizens.

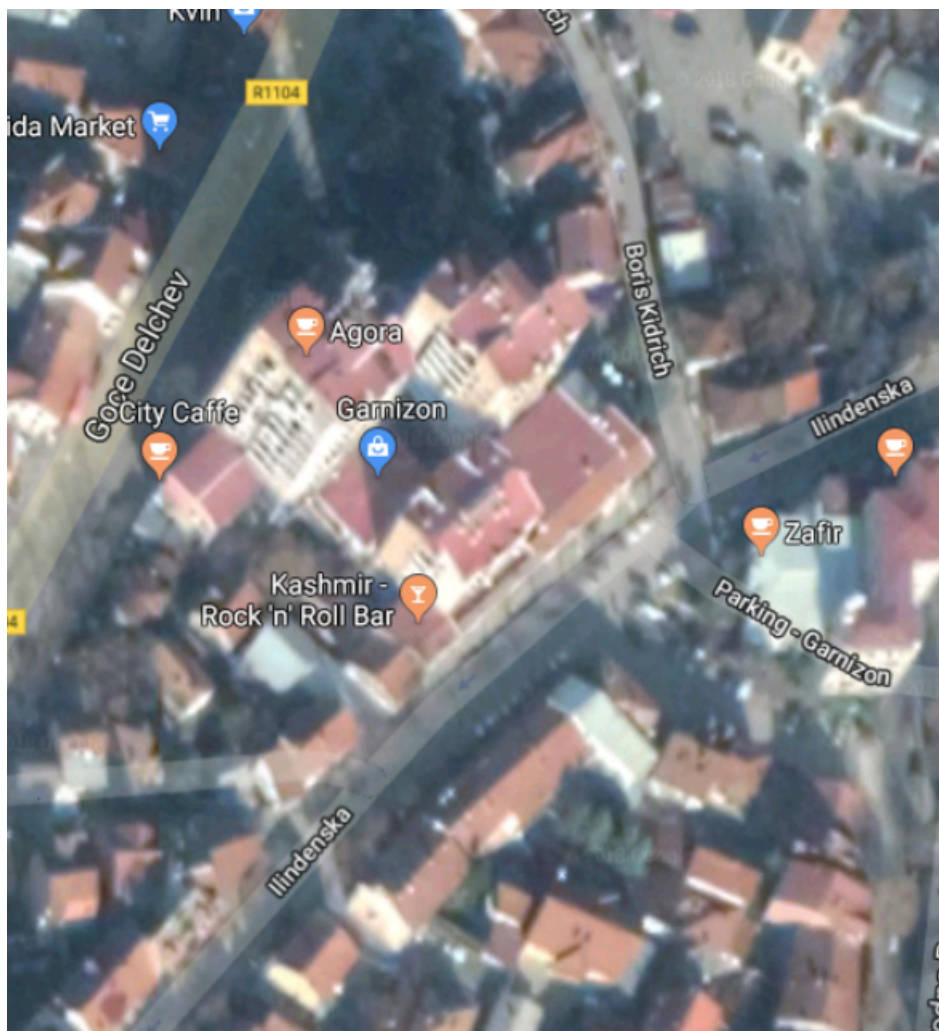
By looking at the spatial practice separately from the representation of space, or conceived space, does not indicate that the two are separate processes. As discussed in the previous chapter, the three processes are dialectically connected to each other and as such the focus cannot be placed exclusively onto one of the processes. The focus, on the contrary, should be on the main process of the production of space, which is an “intricate web of relationships that is continuously produced and reproduced” (Schmid, 2008). Space is an outcome of the interplay of these processes.

The spatial practice in Kumanovo, just as the representation of space discussed above, is a vital process which in its interplay produces and reproduces the social space, and where

ethnicity and ethnic identity emerge unquestioned. Moreover, perception constitutes an integral part of social practice within our social reality.

The focus of the spatial practice, or perceived space that will be discussed here, cannot allow itself to be an extensive one due to the nature of this research. This part, however, will focus on some of the most crucial and tangible spaces of the city, its functionality and the everyday life interaction and communication practiced in them. The choice of the landmarks does not come as an accident. The three spatial practices are integral to the conceiving and living of the social space in the city. Moreover, they are three crucial landmarks which condition social practice and life of the inhabitants. Additionally, as important practices, they help in the production and reproduction of the ethnic divide between the communities.

The first of these places is Garnizon, a four-floor building near the central square. Previously it was used as accommodation for soldiers and other officials visiting the city. The unusually long building stretches through the street for approximately 300 meters. The structure is placed between two roads running parallel to each other: on one side of the building is a street considered Macedonian space. On the other side is the one considered Albanian space. One sees people from both the communities using both roads and spaces, as well as the building. However, as a spatial practice, the two streets belong to different social spaces each perceived differently from each other.



Garnizon Building. Google maps aerial view

The everyday life in Garnizon seems at first as usual practice of people. The floors are occupied by cafes, bars, restaurants, and shops. It is not the typical shopping mall you might think. It is an open air area with many corridors and balconies. Cafés have tables outside in the aisles, and you might bump into the mannequin of some boutique on the way to the restaurant. The underground main floor is used as a passageway from one street to the other. Many use this space as a meeting point to then continue on to the bar or café. The space of Garnizon is one of the most important spaces used by people living in Kumanovo and visitors alike. Although the majority of those who use this space are the young

generation, the adult generation is also a frequent user of the facilities in this building. This makes it a landmark in the process of spatial practice and how society at large perceives space.

When you go to Garnizon, as an inhabitant of the city, you already know which side, floor and place to go to. A Macedonian will go to the Macedonian bar, restaurant or shop. An Albanian will go to the Albanian ones. Each floor, each side of the building is spatially divided between the two communities. In one building, there are two spatial practices which structure the social life of the different groups. At a closer look, the ground floor, used as a passage by most people, functions as a spatial practice too. On one side of the hall, there are two Macedonian bars. Opposite of them there is one café, a gambling bar and a confectionery shop. The latter ones are associated with Albanian social space.

Going up on the first floor of the building you are reminded of who this social space belongs to. In this floor, there are only cafés, and all of them are the social space of youngsters from the Albanian community in Kumanovo. They are a meeting place for the youngsters, at least two times a day. Among the Albanian population in Macedonia, as in the one living in Albania and Kosovo, the practice of meeting in a café is prevalent.

Usually, people meet in a café two times a day, in the morning and in the afternoon, to talk or as in most cases just pass the time together. Four months of my fieldwork in Kumanovo I very rarely saw Macedonian youngsters being on the second floor, let alone in any of the cafés.

The same can be said about the presence of any Albanians in the Macedonian bars in the ground floor. In fact, I was confronted with surprise by the owner, bartender and other people in the bar when it emerged that I was Albanian and was present there. *“How come you are here? We serve beer and cognac, you know?”* would be a common question hinting at the fact that in the Albanian spaces alcohol was not sold due to religious grounds. Others would wonder aloud *“whether I am mistaken about the floor”* or whether I was Albanian from Macedonia at all. In fact, when all of them received the news that I was from a city in the south of the Republic of Albanian (which in Albania is mostly associated

with Christianity) they would sigh and say: “*Ahh now we see, of course, it's different when you are here, because you are from Albania and not an Albanian from Macedonia*”. Thus, the difference that they associated with the spatial practices was only about “their” Albanians.

The second floor is filled with cafés as well. Four out of the five cafes were Albanian and as in the first floor were only frequented by Albanian community people. One of them was a small space at the corner which was perceived as a Macedonian space. This enclave would be frequented by young Macedonians, in isolation from the Albanian bars and space surrounding it. During one of my visits to this floor, while I was sitting and discussing the layout of Garnizon with one of the participants in my research, she mentioned how “*we are taking over Garnizon, slowly slowly, just like we took over this floor.*” She was referring to the fact that the second floor previously was shared somehow equally regarding spatial practice about bars and cafes. In the previous years there were six bars and four of them were Macedonian, while only two Albanian cafes (according to the participant I was interviewing). It was in the last years that the Albanians had “*taken over*” the second floor of Garnizon according to her and to other people I met in this location. It is of great importance to see the significant effect of space in the daily life of people.

The social spaces in the building have clear boundaries as to which group they belong. If someone was not aware of this “belonging” he/she was reminded by the spatiality in a joking manner. On the ground floor, as in the other floors, the noise, the view and the semiotics remind someone of the space. In the first and second floor, all the cafes play on a deafening level all the time Albanian music. Bartenders would signal to me and say: “*Do you feel like in Albania yet?*” hinting at the way they want to make this space resemble. You could hear the music on all the floors of the building. When a song with more nationalist overtone would come as next on the playlist, the volume would go even higher, and you could hear it even inside the Macedonian Bars. “*Here we go again*” would any Macedonian around me underplay the importance given to the volume raise and advance of

the spatial noise by the Albanian youngsters in the bar.

Some 200 to 300 meters away from the Garnizon, is the central square of Kumanovo, the second space to be presented in this part of the chapter. The square is officially known as the Batko Georgija Square, and received its name after a small statue of “Batko Georgija” placed next in the center of it. “Batko” was a legendary man of Kumanovo, who was a hardworking, but also one who loved living the life. He loved drinking, he was a womanizer, loved flirting, dancing and singing in kafannas, the traditional restaurants/bars of Macedonians. According to many, “Batko” symbolized the life of many Kumanovars, Macedonian Kumanovars at least.

During the Yugoslav Federation, the central square was named after the leader of the Yugoslav Communist Party, Joseph Bros Tito. As with Garnizon's different floors in the building, Batko square too was used by all the communities despite being associated with Macedonian everyday social space. The Albanian community would use the space only as a passage, making it inaccessible as part of their everyday life. The square was surrounded by two restaurants and bars and many shops and groceries frequented by Macedonians, associating it with the other groups' space. For the Macedonian community, this spatiality and its association with their everyday life was important to talk about. The Albanian community on the contrary could not conceive of such space as their own through the others' legends and discourse. The discourse and discussions around the square made it challenging to perceive it as a spatial practice of their own for the Albanian community. This can be perfectly portrayed by what a young Albanian man whom I asked whether he knew where the statue of ‘Batko Georgija’ was, or what it represents. His reply that moment strengthened some of the outcomes of this research: *“I don't know where or what it is. I am an Albanian, and we don't know about the Macedonian stuff here”*. I replied by providing the extra information I had on how “he is supposed to be a person from the history of the city and a character that everyone in the city is grown up with.” *“I don't know, never heard of him or anything related to him”* was his final reply. While the person knew about the space and the location of it, he did not know the social space of it, of how

this space through conceiving and living it has a meaning for a group of society.

Another similar example happened on the same day, in the streets of the city when I asked the location of the Green Market. At the start, the person was confused and replied: "*there is no such thing as Green Market in the city.*" I was speaking English to him without knowing he was Albanian. When he and I realized we could talk in Albanian, I put again the question and this time I used the Albanian name of Green Market, which is the Vegetable market. He immediately knew the space and location I was talking about and directed me to it. As in the previous example happening that day, this as well showed how the same territory is perceived in different terms socially and the impact a social space can have on the existing division, but also on bridging it.

At the same time, these two examples hold within them a great importance not only about the efficiency of how top-down policies by state institutions work but also how everyday life is shaped such relations and moreover through actions of everyday life that get reproduced or cause the emergence of new ones. Ethnic boundaries are maintained, reproduced and constructed by everyday life actions. The top-down policies in the city of Kumanovo, as in other parts of Macedonia, are manifold but they have to be understood in the light of space and everyday social life.

In Kumanovo, as in other cities and villages in Macedonia, the virtual ethnic boundaries had more to do with cultural, national and religious identity. Religion was a distinctive marker in the ethnic boundaries of the population. These boundaries though were not symbolic boundaries, but more than ever were translated into physical ones, demarcating territory by the placement of a mosque in the entrance of a village or city. The minarets were another spatial boundary in the cities, villages, and neighborhoods of Macedonia. In fact, one of the main reasons I realized I was on the Albanian side of the town was when I saw the mosque.

After that mosque, the difference was becoming evident of the different culture and the symbolic boundaries between the two ethnicities. While on the same level, on the Macedonian side, the high towers of the orthodox churches and the bell rings coming from

them make you aware of where you are.

But in Kumanovo, the symbolic or cultural ethnic boundaries had even come to occupy the physical space of the town. The ethnic relations were becoming more visible in the physical space of the town than in the actual relations between the ethnic groups. They were marked by the space relations since the division of the groups was being engraved daily in space.

The minarets, the churches were buildings occupying space, demarcating boundaries. But a lot of these mosques and churches were newly built, as a project by the people, with funds from religious institutions undoubtedly, to signal the ethnicity and religiosity of the town or village. During a bus trip, when I decided to visualize the physical boundaries visible in the villages and cities I crossed, newly build churches and mosques were a big part of those visible spatial structures one could realize where he/she was.

In Kumanovo, the street where the mosque was situated signaled the start of the Albanian part, of the Albanian social reality. After that, the flags were hanging from different windows of apartments and then the language used in private discussions.

5.4. The social space of everyday life ethnicity

During the four months of fieldwork conducted in Kumanovo, the data gathered all pointed to the importance given to the decentralization process and the spatial dynamics that it included. The two previous sections discussed part of the process on how space was conceived and perceived. This section will look into the third process of “lived space” as another crucial component in the “production of social space”.

The data from observations brings to light the process of ethnicization (Brubaker, 2004) as a social process that happens in space. While people in the interviews would discuss the outcomes of decentralization as negative or the impact the division has on both groups, they would themselves continue to reproduce the social space through the everyday activities in the same space they discuss through giving negative connotations to it because of the division.

The lived space, or representations of space, was seen as a continuity within the trim process of social production of space. Lefebvre regarded this process as the less theoretical from all due to dealing with the tangible space and how it is used in everyday life.

The observation and interviews analyzed through this process connect the two theoretical turns in social sciences, that of Ethnicity as Cognitive (Brubaker, 2004) and Production of Space (Henri Lefebvre, 1991). Ethnicization, according to the cognitive turn, aims to look at ethnicity as a practical category, as a process happening in time and space. The lived space process in sociology urges the analysis of such social processes to make sense of space. By analyzing lived space, one can understand the crucial role space has in the social processes, like ethnicization.

Decentralization has been seen as the most important outcome of the Ohrid framework agreement. It was regarded as the only way the minority could have a say in those counties, cities, villages they make up the majority (Dimitrievik, 2010; Lokale, 2011; Petroska-Beska & Najcevska, 2004). Decentralization and the reshaping of regions after the Ohrid agreement, as mentioned earlier, was a policy directed toward reaching the 22% number of

the population to be able to decide on cultural and language issues. The people I met during my fieldwork would always equalize the Ohrid agreement with the article on decentralization. To the common people, the framework peace agreement had only one article, and this was decentralization, which included language, as well as cultural and political rights. In political terms too, all the Albanian political parties running for the different elections would always advocate for the once and for all completion of the decentralization process. It was the most important topic for the Albanian community in Macedonia and Kumanovo.

This policy, notwithstanding the goodwill, led to an increased polarization of space in the city with Albanians tending to live and move in the northwest side of the city nearer to other Albanian communes and the Macedonians more toward the other side, nearer to Macedonian municipalities.

Decentralization, apart from structuring the political discourse on space and territory, structures the everyday life of citizens. Through looking at how the space in Kumanovo is experienced through every day, we can point out the importance of decentralization. Moreover, the process of ethnicization through the quotidian (Henri Lefebvre, 2008) is yet another level of how the conceived and perceived social space of decentralization was always talked about by the participants I met in the fieldwork months.

According to what people said in the interviews, the big idea of decentralization, apart from nominating the space of the city where to live and the ethnic affiliation of that space, had also introduced in the everyday life of the people the importance of numbers and ethnicity, of amount and calculable measurement. In almost every talk held during the fieldwork months, the question of “how many Albanians live here; how many Macedonians live here; percentages of population etc.” was always present at a given time of the talk.

In everyday life, the lived social space in Kumanovo would be lived through the numbers, demography, and percentages (Karner, 2007; Henri Lefebvre, 2008; Vankovska, 2006; Wilkens, 2002). All these spatial talks concerning numbers represented in the minds of

many of the participants more than just space, a territory or the neighborhood. It represented to them the idea of having the “Albanian Kumanovo,” the place where Albanians are the majority and rule. The lived space for the youngsters was the Albanian nation, imagined by making up the majority of the population. This process of ethnicization of the social space and the individual was not in any way represented as a group activity, although people felt that they belonged to the group. It was a process whereby people would involve the “political, social, cultural and psychological processes” (Brubaker, 2004).

The everyday life of the young people in the Kumanovo is very much concerned with increasing their presence in the city center. Talking about percentages and numbers, they claim the city of Kumanovo is an Albanian city “*because we are not only in the outer neighborhoods but also in the city center.*” The city center in the last years has gained importance for the Albanians and Macedonians alike. During the months I was there different small concerts were organized celebrating culture and identity of each of the communities. In all the talks and interviews the participants from the Albanian community felt that they had to “fight” to claim the city, starting from the city center, the Garnizon, the cafes and bars in the city center and parks and recreational places there. As one participant said about Garnizon: “*we are taking over here too.*” These words expressed the many other feelings and actions by other young people in the city who saw space as very important for the ethnic relations and ethnic identity.

“*The city of Kumanovo cannot be Macedonian because it has always been Albanian,*” was the repeated statement when talking about the city and demographics. Their quest to claim the city space from the Macedonians was not an exceptionally exclusive one. The Macedonians were not excluded from the city: they just had to be a minority due to the city always having been an Albanian one.

The concepts of number, percentage, population, “territory” city and neighborhood” were concepts which seemed to guide the everyday actions of many people in the city of

Kumanovo. Claiming social space was an ongoing everyday activity. In the structure of Garnizon, mentioned earlier, for example, the different Albanian bars were playing every day Albanian music on a deafening volume which you could hear even when you were outside on the streets near it. While being in the cafe, you occasionally heard from different customers shouting to the bartender or the waiter: *“Put it louder, so they hear it”* (referring to the Macedonians in the Garnizon).

On July during a football match of Albanian national team, I experienced what it meant to claim space and the effect it had on the young people of the city, how spatiality was talked about and conveyed. On that day, it seemed as the stadium moved to Garnizon in Kumanovo. Every young Albanian seemed to be watching the game in Garnizon: prepared with the national colors and flags but also with the voice to scream, sing and shout Albanian songs so the “others” could here and realize “who the locals of Garnizon were.” Some of the shoutings were exactly claiming the space: *“Kumanova e shqiptarve (Kumanovo of Albanians)”* or *“Garnizoni eshte I joni (Garnizon is ours)”*.

The constructing and reconstructing of ethnicity is more than ever realized from above in Kumanovo, through policies and political discourses. It is constructed through the everyday by the young people of the city, the generation which emerged after the 2001 Ohrid agreement and the post-1991 independence. This generation, barely sharing social space and hardly conjuring the everyday life with the other community, is further isolated along ethnic lines.

When the high school official, discussed previously, acknowledged that “it was better this way”, referring to the school separation, the spatial dimension was not inferred. The spatial division was regarded as a distant worry for the people although indirectly it governed the communities’ social life. The headmaster mentioned that his school had a way much better fate than other schools in the city. I did not dwell much on these words at the moment. However, in future talks, different other people started to mention more the “fate” other institutions had. In their words, there was: *“physical move of life; separation of everyday*

life and space by walls and locked doors.”

“Naim Frasheri” elementary school in the city, where both Albanian and Macedonians were attending, took separation literally and build a wall in the middle of the school building to separate the students. The two different social spaces had created for themselves different social realities and represented different ways of life for the young and old living in the city. Before going to this measure, other tools were tried: one being that Albanians would attend school in the afternoon while the Macedonian pupils in the morning. The spatial problem was resolved by introducing time measurement. The time separation did not work and so the spatial division took over.

Some other schools have still the same building and space for the students, but the children of one of the ethnic group start the school one hour later, avoiding in this way the direct contact and “clashes” that might appear if they entered school at the same time.

Apart from instilling in the consciousness of children and people clear boundaries, spaces, and identities, these measures also alter the social life. They change the same everyday life actions which drive the construction and reconstruction of ethnicity, ethnic relations. They do this by invoking notions of insecurity, population, demographic, harassment, ideas that have an important impact in guiding the mundane life of people in Kumanovo. On the other hand, space has shaped the social relations and everyday social life of citizens after the armed conflict. Dialectically such social relations and the everyday life continue to maintain and build more space, the separated space of the ethnic groups

These all were the ethnic relations occupying the everyday social life and the social space of the people. These measures and these spatial divisions were in no way seen or talked as a painful separation or social division since according to them *“it was better this way ... no one gets hurt”*. The spatial division was accepted through their everyday life. It was through the living the space that people of Kumanovo were in the process of ethnicization.

On the other hand, ethnicization was incredibly vibrant within the city walls, in the streets and many private buildings. Wall spray, immature graffiti on walls and streets reiterated the

social space in the city. You knew the social space you were in by the different sprays in the walls, either denigrating the other group or claiming the city for one group.

A “war” on wall spray (see Appendix I) was being undertaken for some time, as I heard from other people in the city. Young groups go at night and spray statements, from “Kosovo is Serbia” to “Kumanovo (in Cyrillic alphabet)” mostly on the Macedonian side of the town. Equally, the “Iliret” would write on their walls “Shqiperi Etnike (Ethnic Albania, referring to Greater Albania idea including Macedonia) or “Kumanovë” (this being the name of the city in Albanian) and other statements claiming the city space as their own.

Although these wall sprays were very amateur and done by young people associated with different football fan groups they fulfilled two significant roles unconsciously: demarcating the space into the various ethnic groups and inflicting fear of entering that social space.

In the interviews, I asked whether Albanian people had been in the neighborhood which was mostly associated with a Macedonian presence. The participants would immediately answer to me: *“No, no we can’t go there, they will harass and attack us if we go.”* This reply was replicable by many other people I met and to Macedonians as well about Albanian side of the town. When asked if they had ever been harassed in any Macedonian neighborhood, almost everyone would reply: *“No no, but we have heard the story of ...”* and then continue with the same story repeated by everyone on someone being violently attacked in this or that area of the town.

During the same interview, one of the guys said: *“I would like not to be this separated”* realizing that the city is separated. He saw that he was isolated from other young Macedonians leaving no space for interaction; realizing the negativity it had on social life and the future; but continued *“it’s better like this because there will be fights; its better separated now because there will be attacks again.”*

This was a continues reply and statement underlying the many levels of the work social space plays in everyday life of the people of Kumanovo and the Macedonian society at large.

5.5. The Case of Ethnic Social Space

As the discussion of the findings throughout this chapter aimed to show, the production of social space in the city of Kumanovo cannot be analyzed through one single pair of lenses. Many processes interplay with each other to produce and reproduce the social field in which people create their worldview through everyday life activities.

The separation of analysis in this chapter into how space is perceived, conceived and lived does not in any way aim at separating the three processes of production of space. The three process are dialectically related to each other to produce what I call in this thesis the ethnic social space (Amin, 2002; Billig, 1995; Cowan, 2000; Harvey, 2012; Janev, 2011; Kanishka et al., 2008; Karner, 2007; Henri Lefebvre, 1991; Henri Lefebvre et al., 1996; Schmid, 2008; Soja, 1989).

As it is evident from the examples and the findings I gathered from the field research, often the three processes were entangled. The samples showed the modes in which social space is produced and reproduced by the three processes at the same time. In the findings from the interviews and the observations from the fieldwork, I could analyze all the three processes. The outcome, like any other analysis conveyed in different studies of social space, included all the three processes in it, in a dialectical process. Schmid (2008) argues that someone cannot conceive of any space without having the means and processes in play to perceive it, create the representation of the surrounding space. Moreover, we cannot talk of conceiving and perceiving without looking and giving the same importance to the process of how space is lived through the everyday life of the common people.

The fact that the three processes discussed above deal with analyzing the social space should not obscure the focus on ethnicization (Brubaker, 2004). As I have tried to mention throughout the chapter, ethnicization is a process in which individuals cognitively produce and reproduce the relations they create in society. This process is closely linked with the process of the production of social space in societies such as that in Macedonia and specifically the city of Kumanovo. Social spaces, conceived, lived and perceived, are but

processes which are an integral part of how people conceive their social life. In this research and fieldwork, the subjects perceive the social world through ethnicity as the main denominator of difference between people.

By looking at the interplay of the production of social space and ethnicization, it gives the deserved attention to space and spatiality in the social research. As Lefebvre and other authors through the spatial turn have tried to show, space is an integral part of our daily life and is fundamental to our making sense of the world. It cannot be conceived as an independent material indicator that can be studied and analyzed without any social process. It is through social processes such as ethnicity that one can better understand the production of social space, as it is evident from the examples I have shown in this last chapter. Thus, ethnicity and ethnic relations give the spatial turn in the social research its deserved place as being integral to analyzing the importance of space for our societies.

On the other hand, the cognitive turn owes just as much to the spatial turn for understanding some of the cognitive ethnic analysis in a broader view.

The cognitive process of ethnicization that individuals recounted themselves cannot be decoupled from such cognitive categories such as space, everyday activities, locations, landscapes, specific locations, etc. These are integral aspects of the cognitive process that people use to make sense of their world.

To conclude, then, cognition happens in space, just as space uses the cognitive process by way of producing (perceiving, conceiving and living) social space.

6. Conclusion

The topics of space and ethnic relations are rarely brought together in analysis by sociologists and social theorists. Until recently, the two were not considered to be related to each other. The division and separation of communities was analysed through many different aspects of social life yet spatiality was not one of those analytical lenses. With the emergence of the “spatial turn”, social processes began to be considered through the analytical framework of spatiality; however, ethnic relations and ethnicity were largely eluded by this approach.

Sociological research on ethnicity and ethnic relations continues to center analysis on larger processes that affect social life such as political or economical group identities. The importance of such processes is not disputed into these lines and the present research does not ambition to create a hierarchy of relevance. Instead, what the research aimed to illustrate is how relevant space can be for sociological research. Particularly when researching ethnicity and ethnic relations, the direct relation that space and ethnicity carve out needs to be considered. The integral part that space plays in maintaining tension, conflict, division, or enabling peaceful coexistence should be further analyzed as an independent factor and process instead of being coupled with other social processes.

The present research thesis tried to illustrate this proposition by analyzing ethnic relations in the city of Kumanovo, Republic of Macedonia, through the analytical framework of spatiality. In this research space is seen as an independent social process which impacts on the social relations between groups and individuals as much as other social processes. The spatial turn that occurred in the 1960s in the social sciences inspired by philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre helped me reveal the different spatial process in the production of ethnic space in Kumanovo. The three processes of the production of social space, the lived, conceived and perceived space were coupled with events and processes of everyday life from the city in my analysis.

Ethnography and participant observation were the two methods used to gather data, and to

observe social life in its spatial dimension. As already explained, the choice of these two methods allowed a more in-depth understanding of the social processes in which social actors are embedded.

The data gathered and its analysis showed that space is indeed an independent social process in determining social and ethnic relations. The division of communities is maintained through the ways in which the two communities perceive, conceive and live different social spaces from each other. The three processes of social production of space are important in the analysis because they touch upon all the other processes. By looking at the data and the theoretical luggage of this new approach we could see how perceived space incorporates politics and economy, by analysing how top-down policies and discourses structure the perceiving of space. At the same time, the analysis of data illuminated the how space is conceived, by looking at how individual actions encompassing the modes in which social actors deal with their surroundings are structured by social rules and norms. The living of the space on the contrary is a viewpoint of how the actors define their surrounding and how they live, or experience, space in their everyday life.

By employing spatial analysis, the present research looked at ethnic relations through a different angle than the traditional economic and political ones. Placing the right emphasis onto spatial analysis can provide a more comprehensive and integrated study of ethnic relations. My research shows that ethnicity and ethnic relations cannot be decoupled from spatial analysis. An analysis of this kind can contribute towards an understanding of the ways to overcome the tense and strained relations between communities. Spatial analysis of this kind can better inform policies and economics about the bridges that can be built between the communities.

The crucial point is to look at space as a changeable component in social life which is subjected to the views, processes and lives of the actors themselves. The social production of space opens up the possibility for different ethnic groups to conceive, perceive and live their social space. This research was focused on a small city, however its outcomes and

mode of analysis can apply to bigger cities or a country-wide sample. The analytical tools used here can be employed for research in societies such as the Macedonian one, with an old minority community. Equally, this type of research can be very beneficial for those societies where the migrant community has increased in recent years. Many cities in Western Europe and North America are faced with segregation of migrant communities. The spatial division of the communities is sharpening drastically throughout these cities leading to ghettoization of whole neighborhoods which previously were mixed and lively. An analysis of the production of social space in such communities and contexts can help authorities, society and different stakeholders gain a thorough understanding of how spatial separation leads to ghettoization.

The nature of this research, a Master's Thesis, brings its limitations, as well as opens up future possibilities.

A significant limitation that surfaced towards the end of preparatory work and of fieldwork was the amount of time spent doing the field research. The time limitations of the data gathering process impacted the amount of data, as well as its analysis. However, the research and analysis were continued with the data I was already in possession of. And yet, more data would have increased the reliability of the research. However, as a Master's thesis and given the lack of funds to sustain the fieldwork, it was impossible to spend more time in the fieldwork to gather data.

Such types of limitations do open up more opportunities for future studies on this topic. The type of research on ethnic relations in Macedonia are focused solely on issues of identity, politics and economy. A new perspective on the ethnographic analysis of small groups can diversify the topic. At the same time, fresh analysis of this kind can open up new perspectives for furthering this issue, which has been crucial in the last 20 years in the country.

During the research, as already mentioned in the methodology part, one of the difficulties was how my identity was seen by the different groups. Being an Albanian from the

Republic of Albania had both its positives and negatives with regard to the two communities.

While it was a very important asset regarding the language I shared with one of the ethnic groups, it did limit my interaction with the Macedonian group and youngsters. Many people from the Macedonian community saw me as yet another Albanian who wants to write of how Albanian are oppressed in their country by Macedonians. While this was never my intention, it was sometimes difficult to erase the suspicions of the people I met.

On the other side, my being Albanian did not go as smoothly as I had expected with the Albanian community in the country. Being from the south of Albania, and not a Muslim⁵ was a reason for many not to trust me and consequently not want to meeting with me.

While these are some setbacks that occur in every research, especially those focused on small groups and areas, the improvement or fine-tuning of methods can help with further research. Additionally, future research on spatial production in the Republic of Macedonia needs to be extended to more cities and towns and at its best create a comparison to their historical background and contexts. While the mechanisms of social production of space are visible through the analysis of one city, a comparison of different other contexts and backgrounds will help in a more profound understanding of the divisive ethnic relations in the country and within the society.

⁵ In the south of Albania is the largest group of Christian Orthodox in the Republic of Albania.

Appendixes

Appendix I



Figure 1: Entrance to one of the schools of the city of Kumanovo: The eagle from the Albanian flag is drawn on the central wall. On the two sides are drawings of the official figure of the 100th Anniversary of Albanian independence from the Ottoman Empire highly celebrated in Kumanovo in 2012.

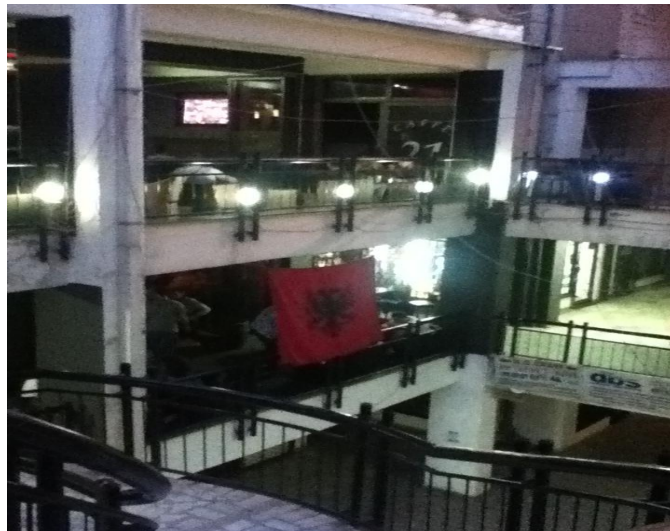


Figure 2: The Garnizon building in the city center: Bars situated on each floor demarcate their ethnicity. Ways of expressing the ethnic group affiliation varies from flags, to loud music but also symbolic ones such as non-selling of alcohol.



Figure 4: Street sprays in the walls from the different football groups. This is an over sprayed by the Macedonian football fan group over the Albanian name of the group. This wall spray was in one neighborhood near the center of the city, where a majority of Albanians were living but where Macedonians families lived as well: a contested space of the neighborhoods of the city.



Figure 5: A wall spray by the Macedonian Football group in the youth center situated in the Albanian side. The spray writes the name of the city in Macedonian Cyrillic alphabet.

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